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AIDS AND OBSTACLES TO WORLD CIVILIZATION

William E. Hocking

If a civilization is to be identified by its place, and so has a geographical boundary, we should have to say that Western civilization has already taken its leave. Its thoughts and ways have spread far beyond lands of the West, and, equally it has ingested thoughts and ways from afar. Neither of these processes has, so far, destroyed its belief in its identity; and neither of them, nor both together, have as yet created a world civilization, though their logic cannot stop short of that goal.

When we speak of the binding ingredients of civilization, we think at once of such interests as world literature, commerce and travel, the sciences, the fine arts, the general notions of law, which by their diffusion create—among those who read, travel, and think—a common corpus of the mental treasury of the race. As books enlarge the experience of the individual, so these migratory elements of culture deposit, as it were, strata of common reference through which men everywhere move toward a common mind.

In the early decades of this century, a Western visitor to a Buddhist monastery in China might have received an agreeable shock on entering the library to find there well-stocked shelves of European and American literature in active use. A further surprise might have been in store for him in visiting some of the large department stores of Tokyo, where the stock of books on active sale included both new and staple volumes in all the major European languages.

Through such spontaneous osmosis of mental treasures there has been during this century a rapid rise in what I have called the "level of presupposition"—the amount of mutual understanding that can be taken for granted when conference begins between men from different parts of the world. It is as if A could say to B, "I know your history, your admirations and your prejudices, and you know mine: let us begin from there." This is a great gain; and it is nothing against the process that it constitutes as yet no notable factor in keeping the peace. There will be no reversal in this tide of mutual informedness

until men become satiated with an overabundant supply beating ir upon a limited capacity for absorption. Meantime it is important fo us to examine more closely the active factors of the process.

Medieval civilization was in its ideal an organic unity. Religion law, education, music, science, architecture were separate topics bu not separate facts: they belonged together, and the name of the tota was religion. The modern period has accomplished the separation in fact. It has "secularized" each of these interests except religion itself —and perhaps religion has not wholly escaped. The motive has been one of emancipation, the growth of liberty in the form of autonomy. The mother of all the arts has seen her children withdraw one by one from the parental oversight, and for the most part without gratitude and even without sense that there is a family tie. There have been books with such preposterous titles as *Warfare between Science and Religion.* In any case, the emancipation is irreversible: neither science nor education nor law nor economy have any intention of seeking reincorporation in the domestic circle of the church, nor does the church dream of seeking it.

I am prepared to believe that all of these interests have suffered by their separation, and have also gained by it; and that religion itself has gained more than it has suffered. But I also believe that the separation is irreversible not because of its advantages but because it was inevitable. The necessities of specialization demanded it; only through the development of autonomous techniques could the possibilities of any one of these interests be explored. The ties that continue to unite the several arts must be recognized by the special workers—remembered but not instituted. Meantime, among the gains there is one which nobody foresaw: the *enhanced facility of spread* of the several fragments of culture.

As long as science was the science of the church, it pertained to Christendom and was to that extent local. As long as law was dominantly canon law, even when the codes of Justinian were added to it it was the law of Christendom and therefore local in the same sense as the law of Islam is local to this day, or the law of the Talmud, or the laws of Manu. Likewise with architecture: a Buddhist country cannot use a Gothic church, nor can we use a pagoda; but the engineering and spatial elements of architecture can travel anywhere

Religion itself is a universal interest; but specific religions seldom travel without human aid. Some years ago I had occasion to observe the working of certain religious missions in Asia. I had already come to the conclusion that any religion worthy of the name must be a missionary religion, simply because God cannot be a local phenome

non. If a religion is valid at all, it must be valid for mankind and not merely for certain kinds of men. But the labor of bringing a particular religion to men of other traditions was obviously enormous, and the achievement frequently heroic. What struck me was that science found no such resistance, and required no missionary movement. Why this difference? Because secularized science can offer itself as an ingredient of *any* concrete civilization without initial quarrel with diverse cultural backgrounds, nationalisms, creedal inheritances. In its nature, religion is too much the heart of any civilization to enjoy this facility of access. Every organized religion must be a particular religion; and a particular religion, while it not only may be but must be universal in its aim, can never be as evidently universal as is science.

Science, therefore, owes its spontaneous spread positively to the fact that people know they want it and will go to get it; negatively, to its emancipation from the ecclesia. The same will be true of the other fragments of culture. Relieved of their special historical trappings, they can move as their value is felt. *Whatever in its nature belongs to all men will be sought by all men*—this is the principle which is automatically making for world unity. Through its own selections, the world must grow toward unity of mind.

But there are two remarks which, in the light of experience, we have to make about this process. One, that this diffusion of ingredients of civilization does not constitute a total civilization: it constitutes a set of special interests—rays or spicules of civilization—whereas a civilization must still be an organic unity of the arts. Two, that in each special case there has emerged a barrier to the process of diffusion, and this barrier has to some extent defeated the hopes that were reasonably built upon its contribution to understanding and peace.

With these points of experience in mind, I now propose to examine three of these interests: science, law, and the fine arts. I choose these three binding ingredients because they are concrete in the sense that they represent bodies of actual human effort and cumulative achievement.

SCIENCE

There are more abstract binding ingredients which have an easier path to run for general acceptance. Instead of science we might, for example, contemplate the multiplication table. The universality of its acceptance, once it is learned, is astounding. I do not recall any recent attack upon it, even by the logicians, and it is the special

business of logicians to attack any surviving bastions of vulgar common sense.

But the trouble with specifying the multiplication table as a world unifying force is this: Any two antagonists, supposing they differ over their trade balances, have to agree on the multiplication table in order that either may prove the other wrong. The multiplication table leaves all controversies precisely where they were. The same would be true of any element of common reason, including most of mathematics and some parts of logic, on which men have to agree in order to define their differences.

I do not minimize the importance of any noncompetitive human interest, however abstract, as an aid to peace. Agreement on ultimate standards, whether of truth or morality or beauty, so far as we can reach it, is more than a binding force: it is evidence of the identity of human nature before the last court of appeal. It is the primary condition of any civilization whatever.

But to rely solely on these unimpeded universalities is a too facile idealism; it lifts no loads. Today we are looking for the roots of trouble; we are seeking the promising fields of concrete co-operation which have developed snags. We have to see why they have developed, and what can be done to release them.

Science is one of these fields. Beyond question, it acts as an affirmative binding ingredient of civilization. Any group can import machines; but no one can run them, still less repair them, and still less build them, without that second-nature feeling for cause-and-effect which is the heart of the scientific mind. The universal craving for machine power and its results is the universal educator in the scientific outlook. And once this outlook is established, it does not stop with the machine shop nor the agricultural station nor the hospital nor the roads, highways, and harbors; but it begins to infiltrate with its rationalizing spirit the whole organization of society, quietly dissolving superstitions and damaging social habits without arousing the anger which attends indoctrination from outside. Science is a great, silent missionary; and all the great missionaries know and use it.

It should also be remembered that the scientific type of mind is a moral as well as an intellectual type. Its code is one of great severity—that of absolute faithfulness to facts and their implications, and of absolute openness of report. Science implies a spirit of world-wide co-operation, of fraternity in a task which is neither personal nor national nor temporary, but permanently and cumulatively human.

As long as human mothers bear children capable of rising to the

intellectual level of a Clerk-Maxwell, a Max Planck, an Einstein, a Schrödinger—and human schools are able to train them—mankind will be bound by the increasingly difficult conditions of scientific advance to respect a law which does not spring from the human will. It is absurd to say that science teaches a democracy in any political sense. In terms of its personnel, science is a natural union of democracy and aristocracy. The democratic element lies not in the fact that all men are equally endowed for scientific work—that notion runs daily farther from the truth—but in the fact that science offers no obstacles to anybody's entrance except those that lie in the nature of its subject matter. Its exclusions are silent, but they are absolute. If you do not understand, you cannot come in. The beauty of this type of exclusion is that it is automatic, not the edict of any personal umpire. And for the future of civilization it is highly necessary that this type of sifting—stratification if you like—be universally understood and accepted; and let me add, not alone in the field of science.

But the normal spread of the scientific mind, and its tough and salutary discipline, encounters obstacles. One meets the view that science must serve the state or the party or the social movement. Science ceased to serve the ecclesia at the beginning of the modern era; but an unemployed energy is a tempting instrument for other masters, especially such as can present themselves as the completer will of the scientist as human being. One may still pick up on the streets of London copies of textbooks published in the twenties by the Plebs Textbook Committee. One of these, a text on psychology, announces itself as "a contribution to proletarian science—to a science formulated, understood and expounded by revolutionary workers for revolutionary workers." If we agree that the truth men need is the truth for their battle, the ideal of "objective truth" may well appear as a heartless abstraction. But once truth becomes the servant of divisive causes, the hostile alignments of men become the hostile alignments of their versions of truth, and the service of science to world unity is at an end. We therefore meet any such proposals to restore the servitude of science with a sense of outrage, as products of political or partisan perversity.

No doubt those motives are present, but what they make use of is an earlier breach in the defenses of science as a nonpartisan witness to objective truth. And the author of this earlier breach—please allow the truth to be told—is science itself.

When science, first directed (in modern times) to the stars and the energies of nature, turned its attention to the human being, it assumed that he also, as a part of nature, is a product of causes operat-

ing according to definable laws. Then what of his thoughts? They also must be products of causes. If man survives, it is not because of the abstract truthfulness of his ideas, but because of their fitness to his practical emergencies. *His truth is relative to his occasions.* This is simply good Darwinian biology in the field of thought. The Marxian doctrine that it is the economic occasions which chiefly determine opinion is only a special form of the prevalent psychology of knowledge. And this prevalent psychology, declaring that knowledge is relative to the exigencies of the active man, is a straight consequence of the original assumptions which set up a physical or biological science of human nature. On this showing, the Marxist is not the only person who cannot tell the objective truth; no thoroughgoing relativist can tell the objective truth, because on his scientific grounds there is no such thing accessible to the human mind. We cannot very well imprison, ostracize or discharge the science of man; and if not, it is of little use trying to imprison, ostracize or discharge its conclusions, or the people who profess them. The only promising course is to meet its logic at its source.

LAW

If our problem were solved and science were free to penetrate the world with its civilizing spirit, we should still not be sure that the fraternity of the intellect would carry with it a fraternity of interest. The only possible world wars of the future are wars between the great promoters of science: there is no contest for uranium ores among peoples not abreast of the higher reaches of technology and its theoretical background. We must therefore, in any case, seek other binding ingredients that might afford solutions of competitive situations. This is the business of human conscience and of law: Are there principles universally valid in this region? Much of the hope of mankind depends on the answer to this question.

The age of Goethe, himself a lawyer by training, was in this respect a hopeful age. It was penetrated by conceptions of a universal ethic and of a legal basis for peace, due largely to the genius and moral force of Immanuel Kant. In Kant's essays on *Perpetual Peace* we find the first sketch of a world law *applying to individuals* within a federation of free states organized for peace.

It was easier for that age than for our own to think in universal terms in the field of law. The fundamental law of the continent was disposed to put faith in a *lex naturalis* which stood at the source of positive law. The Institutes of Justinian set at their head the concise

summary of legal principles derived from the Roman jurist Ulpian: *Honeste vivere, alterum non laedere, suum cuique tribuere;* and there is nothing local about these ideas. Indeed Aristotle had long before familiarized legal thinking with the notion that all actual law contains a universal element side by side with its particular and local element.

If anything, the age of Goethe had carried the universal element to excess. Neither Aristotle, nor Justinian's codifiers, nor St. Thomas Aquinas ever supposed that a complete system of working law could be derived by deduction from the elementary principles of natural law. Yet the code of Frederick the Great put into force between 1780 and 1794, the French civil code put into force in 1804, and the Austrian civil code put into force in 1811, all attempted a rational scheme of legal deduction. At the same time, the notion of natural law itself had been cleared of all specific theological associations, at least in France. It had been transformed in western Europe and America into the idea of the natural rights of individuals; and the basis of these rights was considered rather as a deliverance of human reason than as an institution of God. Jefferson appealed to both sources; but it was human reason ("We hold these truths to be self-evident") which sustained the divine origin ("endowed by their Creator with unalienable rights"). The very phrase "rights of man" implies that these bases of law are universal by definition. The way was open for the swift spread of a common law of mankind.

But neither the procedures of the French Revolution, nor Napoleon's peculiar way of applying Rousseau's dictum that men must be compelled to be free, nor the example of these rationalized codes acted as living arguments. It is little wonder that balanced minds like Goethe's held themselves apart from the enthusiastic partisanships of the period. What is perhaps more remarkable is that with unanimous consent the significant developments of jurisprudence in the nineteenth century, from Savigny and Austin to Von Ihering and Duguit, denounced the rights of man as an unsatisfactory basis of law.

What was the trouble? Natural rights, just because they are universal, are not and cannot be touched by any element of history or custom or psychology or legislative decision; whereas any living law is touched, nay impregnated, with all of these things. From the beginning, British common law held itself aloof from the rational codifying tendencies of the Continent; and Burke passionately protested that in England nobody wanted the rights of man but only the rights of Englishmen. As long as this division endures, this obstinate British (and American) historicism in law puts the rational

picture of the received Roman law of the Continent in the paradoxical position of one more historical provincialism.

But the plain fact of practice is that all actual law is "positive law"; it is enacted by particular legal authorities in particular societies; and positive law is little fitted to travel beyond the community of its origin. For centuries the codes of Europe spread beyond Europe only by way of colonization. As for Asia and Africa, the capitulations, the extraterritorial courts, the Mixed Courts of Egypt, stood during their existence as monuments to the firm localism of legal practice. And the legal mind, for some strange reason, considers itself to be first of all practical.

The essence of the difficulty is, I think, that all general principles have a certain rigidity which makes it difficult to apply them literally to individual cases, and all cases are individual. The fact that law is one of the tough disciplines of the race, in which tenacious interest grinds against tenacious interest, makes the facile idealism of simple subsumption of case under legal rule or principle unacceptable. Hence arises a steady tendency of applied law, especially in a changing society, to take on an aspect of administration, and to discount the element of universality. This tendency leads to an absurd hostility to general principles as such, summarized in the dictum of Mr. Justice Holmes that "general principles do not determine concrete cases." With such a dictum, law, like science, seems to have signed an abdication of its own calling to universality.

I do not speak here of international law. For if there is no universality in domestic law, whose subjects are human individuals having a certain biological similarity, still less can there be universality in international law where the corporate individuals who are its nominal subjects have no biological similarity and every case may with double cause be called unique. Besides, international law on just this ground has made its own formal abdication by creating the category of non-justiciable cases; and this category includes the cases most likely to cause wars.

In spite of these and other developments in jurisprudence, the instinct of mankind persists in the assumption that there must be within the varieties of human conscience some community of standard, and that this community must eventually show itself in a tangible rapprochement among legal systems. And strange to say, just in this present century of conflict and disaster, more has happened to corroborate this assumption than in all the previous centuries of Western civilization, as if some twenty-century plant were coming to flower.

It is this century which has seen the gradual disappearance of the extraterritorial courts of Asia, *pari passu* with the adoption in various Asiatic lands of codes based on the general plan of the codes of Europe. Japan, Siam and, in 1930, China have published such codes. For our purposes, the latest of these is the most instructive. Volume I of the Chinese Civil Code is devoted—without apology—to general principles and bears that title. In the Preface to the English translation occur these words:

> [This code] follows in its theoretical procedure the principles which the modern juridical science is spreading steadily all over the world, and which are tending to constitute a sort of universal common law . . . thus facilitating the development of international relations. In this respect its coming into force will strengthen the ties which link us with the friendly nations of the world, and will foster our trade relations with them.

The Preface goes on to state that there are sections of the Code which are peculiarly Chinese, such as those relating to real property. The writers had the magnificent good sense not to suppose that these localisms impugn the force of the sections that *are* universal. We need not dwell on the details nor on the unhappy likelihood that this great work may not bear fruit in the China immediately ahead of us. The significant thing is that, just in this century, much of Asia recognized in certain principles of law ingredients of civilization binding East and West.

And one further remark especially concerns us here. The chief European basis for the codes of these several nations—though many documents were brought into evidence—was the great German Civil Code completed in 1896 and put into effect January 1, 1900. This monumental achievement, specifically German, came nearer than any other document to expressing the common legal sense of mankind.[1]

[1] With this German contribution to the expression of common human norms for domestic law, I would like to note a very recent German contribution to international law, the contribution of an individual which, however, has the force of being the contribution of a people.

The twelve trials constituting the Nuremberg processes have been completed. Unfortunately, no German jurist has been directly active in the findings of this Court, whose proceedings have the hope of adding new chapters to international law, and may do so if their findings prove to be universally applicable, and not merely the legal flourishes whereby a victor justifies his dealings with the vanquished.

To give it this universal character, it would be not only important but necessary to associate with its findings *the German sense of justice*. For until Germany is an active part of the new era in its legal character, the world is not yet one world, and not yet at peace.

Under these circumstances, the deed of the late Professor Gustav Radbruch is of decisive importance. Gustav Radbruch, professor of law in Heidelberg and ranking

ART

Art makes no such promise as one finds in the structure of science or law to supply a binding ingredient of civilization. There is no such thing as an accepted method for producing fine art. There is no world formula for co-operative effort. There is not even an accepted canon of what constitutes a good piece of work. The local note in art is at least as vigorous as the local note in law and custom. Every artist achieves a certain individuality, perhaps more surely if he does not try for it than if he does; and every piece of work bears at the same time the stamp of its place and time of origin. The womb of art production is subconsciously but sacredly dedicated to preserving the full flavor of personal and provincial quality in its output.

In spite of these things I believe that fine art is not only our most available and effective binding ingredient of civilization, but that it promises to cure some of the ills arising in science and law.

For one thing, while every art work is marked by its locality, this very mark adds to its universal significance. Every one wishes the local sign to be there. If Chinese art were to lose its Chinese tang, a vital part of its charm would vanish. This fact suggests that it may be an error to equate universality with uniformity; for one of the universal traits of man appears to be a craving for the persistence of regional differences within the growing unity of the race. But the essential universality of art lies in its nature as a type of language free from the mechanisms of speech. It differs radically from the articulate organization of concepts. Each art object presents a single meaning, but without subject or predicate. Its meaning arises in the first place from the fact that the theme of the art object is chosen out of a world of possible themes not chosen. Whether it is a reproduction of something in nature or a creation of the artist's imagination, it is selected from an infinitude and is selected for immortalization.

The beautiful thing is indeed passing, the beautiful person disappears, the artist's fascinated mind will itself perish. But if that mind can record its vision in a medium that endures, and thus in effect arrest the passing moment, that beauty is not lost to the race. The artist is always Faust losing his wager; he says deliberately to his moment, *"Verweile doch!"* Without any attempt to arrest the move-

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jurist of Germany, contributed a foreword to a publication in German of the three main speeches of Justice Jackson as prosecuting attorney in the first of these trials. In this foreword, without overlooking the technical difficulties in the statute of the Court, he brought the German legal conscience firmly to the side of such new chapters in international law as may arise from its work. Radbruch must be reckoned among the great German world citizens of our time.

ment of events, his whole effort is to capture that meaning-in-the-event which made him its captive. Goethe himself is an example of the persistent loyalty of the artist to his theme, as after many years he returns to the idea of Faust.

If the selection of the artist successfully carries to others without words the *why* of the selection, the language is at once universal; it needs no translation, and in reality admits none. It makes the artist, near or remote, at once intelligible; and this is his purpose, for he pictures his audience as his fellow townsmen perhaps, but through them, as man. And in contrast to science and law, he has been in this intention remarkably successful. In a Philadelphia collection we find art objects from the Congo, and we begin at once to enter the souls of their makers. The Aurignacian hunters who left their animal figures in the caves of France make nothing of the time interval which separates them from us. What we recognize is the instant internationalization of all sincere art. Thus the galleries of the world are shrines to which pilgrims from all lands repair, and in their costly acts of reverence they actually knit mental bonds which begin to unite the ends of the earth.

With this international character goes, as a consequence, the *qualification of ownership.* In legal terms, all art objects, whoever their nominal possessor, are under a servitude to the human race. Private and local ownership is morally incomplete. The possessor has no *jus abutendi;* he is not free to injure or destroy what, by contract, is his. This universal claim of the nonowners has as yet no legal status, and may never acquire one; we have no redress against the owner who neglects or loses or ruins a world treasure he has paid for. But in the minds of men the claim has tangible validity. War itself has hestitated to destroy the art of an enemy; and when this intuition is violated, the world's feeling is ranged against the destroyer.

Nor can destruction by one side ever justify an answering destruction of art by the other for retaliation or for purposes of morale. For this there are three reasons. First, what is destroyed is not solely the property of the enemy, but also of the destroyer and of the rest of mankind. Second, what is destroyed had in it the element of healing which, when war is done, becomes an irreplaceable factor of recovering peace. Third, the enemy who knows that war must destroy knows also that it must not destroy art; so that if art is destroyed the destroyer joins the committers of world crimes.

Western art, like other phases of Western culture, has been secularized, in the sense that it has broken away from the special themes and

techniques of the church. In the liberty of its material and wide experiment in expression it contributes to the richness of artistic resource in all traditions.

But there is a sense in which no serious art can be either wholly secular or abstract. If we revert to the function of selection, and pursue a stage further the question above raised—why the artist chooses just this aspect of the world for immortalization—the brief and dogmatic answer is that he chooses the spots where the world is transparent to him. The world does not habitually wear its heart on its sleeve, but here and there its vitality can be perceived; it is this which arrests the artist's eye and places on him, at the same time, the obligation of faithful report. He is a man under command, as much compelled to a loyal objectivity as is the scientist. His obedience is his distinction and his world mission.

In his own terms he reveals what the philosopher tries to capture in literal discourse and argument, and what prophet and theologian declare in dogma—the truth that the world has meaning. Thus the artist speaks what we may call the undogmatic religion of mankind. And his message passes into the mind of men everywhere without the resistance which formula and argument everywhere provoke. It is not the whole of any religion. It remains impersonal, as lacking the direct address of God to the individual soul. But it lifts with its own positive insight the load of negation, and destroys at its root the lurking materialism which declares the "purposeless universe" the last word of a fully objectified truth.

Even if science and the law were free of internal obstacles, they could not of themselves maintain the integrity of civilization; they would still lack the uniting persuasion, the emotional instancy, the stirring of love toward life and nature and man which are necessary to fuse the several ingredients into a consensus. Neither a person nor a society can endure an existence which elicits only stray fragments of affirmation; if we live at all as men, we live in an effortless simplicity of affirmation, and the usual name of this effortless simplicity is religion, which necessarily moves toward a common faith. Until that faith is reached, art with its undogmatic religion carries, apart from its function, a forecast of its quality and something of its substance.

For art is a continuance of creation. Science and law are what they have to be, a report of facts or rules whose nature exists apart from the worker. The work of art is a voluntary addition to what exists. As a binding ingredient, it is simply not there until the free act of the artist puts it there. To that extent the unity and peace of the world

are his free gift to mankind. Let him believe in himself and, as Hindu and Buddhist alike would add, in the divinity within him.

The chief obstacle to the binding power of art comes from the shallowness and vanity of the artist, who in his secularized freedom rejects the responsibility of being a vehicle for the objective reality and seeks to be a language merely for his private consciousness or even his subconsciousness. Autobiographical eviscerations of this sort are seldom of importance to the race. What art most needs today is an appreciation of its great function and a pride in it. In Goethe's conception of the dignity of his mission we see a spirit which might lift the wilderness-wandering art of our generation into a new vision of its world task.

INTELLECTUAL CONDITIONS OF PEACE

We have now to recur to our unanswered question: What can be done about those obstacles which prevent science and law from having their full effect as binding ingredients of civilization?

Science can hardly expect to unite the minds of competing men and peoples if it declares itself to be only a more refined instrument of group survival. Neither can clashes of group interest be expected to seek pacific solutions under law, if law allows its own elements of general principle to be submerged by its local and positive factors. The hopeful side of these difficulties is that the obstacles are in each case artificial; they are products of theory before they are seized upon by an unprincipled partisanship. Tracing the errors to their source, we find them simply in the field of logic: in each case we find the root of trouble in a common mental disposition of the modern era to fall into *false oppositions.*

In the case of science—while the whole position of modern psychology is insecure—one source of confusion can be quickly identified: the false reading of the opposition between "the relative" and "the absolute." It is the "relativity of truth" which has sanctioned the surrender of its universality; and relative truth is quite generally supposed, even among professors, to be incompatible with absolute truth. On the contrary, it assumes absolute truth.

The relative is, of course, by definition that which is not absolute. But every relative implies an absolute, for every relative is relative *to* something; and the statement of what it is relative *to* intends to be an absolute statement. For example, the apparent shape of a table top is relative to your point of view. But the truth of that statement is not

relative to your point of view. Whatever the position of your eye with reference to the table top, it remains true that the apparent shape is a strictly definable function of that position. So with all other relativities: make your statement of relativity complete and you have a judgment of functional dependence which—for that problem—is an absolute truth. That relativities exist in judgments of fact, taste, morals, is one of the important discoveries of adolescence; it is our racial deliverance from provincialism. This is another way of saying that to discover relativity is to be free from (that particular) relativity. When you thus discover a relativity, you surrender a local absolute; but you gain another absolute—one of a slightly more complex structure—the absolute which tells you how and why these local judgments vary.

Suppose, now, that some one makes the important discovery that opinions about property are likely to be relative to the economic interest of the thinker. What becomes of his own opinions about property? If he applies his formula to his own opinions, he will have to conclude that they have been—up to the moment of discovery—relative to his own economic interest. At that moment he has ceased to hold them as absolute: they are no longer "his opinions" as they stand. If he should then say, "I am caught in relativity," he might be telling the truth; if he should add "and I cannot help it," he would be lying.

This is the type of deception and self-deception which dogs the position of every person or group which makes a profession of his own, or its own, relativity. It is the logical serpent at the center of the dogma of inevitable class war. It is the demonstrable falsehood at the heart of any scientific text avowedly "by" partisans "for" partisans.

A self-stultifying position is one that no man can continuously hold, either in words or in actions. If all opinions are relative to interests, then all conversation or conference between persons of differing interests is futile in advance. The class war begins in the mental insulation of classes. But the relativist does occasionally enter into conversation and conference with men of opposing views, thus denying in action what he professes in words. Once in conversation, until he consciously corrects himself, he assumes an identity of word meanings with his interlocutors and of the criteria of truth. Every relativist in unguarded moments is bound to lapse into human normality; and then the strategy is to remind him of what he has done and invite him to continue that way.

This is why those who see the fallacy of total relativity have a peculiar responsibility of patience. They must persistently play the

part of Socrates, and lure the prisoner of self-delusion into those words or actions which deny his fallacy, and at the same time bring him the convincing experience of coming home into the common mind of man. In spite of repeated disappointments, the hope of Socrates cannot be surrendered; eventually the sleeper must wake.

In the case of law, the false opposition which has befuddled jurisprudence and hampered the normal spread of legal ideas is the opposition between particular and universal. The original sin here has to be traced to the philosophers; transferred to law it has begotten a stultifying hostility to general principles as such.

It is impossible for the rational animal to maintain any such hostility; for there is no particular which is not a particular of *some kind,* and to name the kind is to clothe the particular with a general character. Of particular legal cases, two propositions are always true: (1) that no two cases are exactly alike—let us say, no two cases of negligence; (2) that every case is a case of some kind, and to that extent is like other cases of the same kind (every negligence is a negligence). Since differences and likenesses do not exclude each other, but always coexist, these two statements can be in no sort of hostility.

The recurrent attempt to set up an antithesis arises, strange to say, not from the lack of generalities to fit given particulars, but from their abundance. For there is a third proposition, always true: that to every concrete case a number of (consistent) generalities may be assigned. And it is not always true that one can tell by inspection to which of several legal categories a given case belongs. But ambiguities of legal classification have no force whatever in driving out the pertinence of the higher legal generalities. Let us take a well-known example. At the port of Rhodes, about 300 B.C., a rule was in force to the effect that if, in the perils of the sea, the goods of one of several shippers had to be sacrificed to save the ship, the loss should not be borne by that one shipper alone, but apportioned among them all. This ancient rule of jettison touches the universal sense of justice, and it remains valid today in every great port of the world. But this very general principle has expanded into a somewhat complex code of some twenty-three articles under the British name of the Rule of General Average. It took thirty-two years, from 1860 to 1892, to bring this general principle into a set of applications to various types of exigency in modern shipping that satisfied Glasgow, York, Antwerp, Bremen, Genoa and the United States. And the "Revised York-Antwerp Rules" are not yet in a strict sense the maritime law of all modern states. Yet no one can fail to see that the general principle announced at Rhodes is the continuing living spirit of this complex code.

The universal, so far from being opposed to the particular, is what the particular means; and the only way to maintain an opposition between them is to hold that the particular means nothing at all. To see this is to set law free to resume its world-binding mission.

In such ways as this, the conditions of world unity, and so of peace, are primarily intellectual. We fight because we stupidly and therefore falsely analyze our issues. The age of Goethe was great in the simple normality of its intelligence: it was fully conscious of relativity and was all the freer to find its absolutes; it felt the contrasts of decisive living and knew how to bring them into harmony. It played too lightly, especially after Hegel's death, with a formal scheme for the union of opposites, and ran out into a facile idealism unable to deal with the growing miseries of the industrial revolution. But if Marx, who felt these miseries and retained his nominal allegiance to a dialectical process of history, had seen that his great opposition likewise implied a human agreement, we might have been spared his doctrine of class war. For so much is imperfect thinking responsible.

SOVEREIGNTY IN THE WORLD TODAY

Charles McIlwain

NEARLY HALF a century ago Mr. James C. Carter, one of the leaders of the New York bar, in his book on *Law, Its Origin, Growth and Function,* made the assertion that "the theory of Austin has received, both in England and America, a wider acceptance and adoption among juridical writers than any other." Few, I think, would question the accuracy of this statement after a reading of the works of such eminent and influential authors as Sir George Cornewall Lewis, Sir Henry Maine, Professors Dicey and Holland, and more recently the great legal history of Sir William Holdsworth—Austinians all; and I am inclined to believe that Mr. Carter's statement remains as true of English and American political thinking today as it was when he made it.

And yet, no less an authority than F. W. Maitland, the greatest master of them all, ventured to say of John Austin that "though he was at times an acute dissector of confused thought, he was too ignorant of the English, the Roman and every other system of law to make any considerable addition to the sum of knowledge. . . . *j. a.* = *o.*"

Which shall we believe? We must accept one view or the other if we admit the inevitability of human government, as everyone must do except the few lone survivors of the extinct school of philosophical anarchists; and a decision was never more important than today, when we see one great nation rejecting the international inspection of atomic materials because this involves an alleged infraction of that nation's sovereignty; and some of us still have the painful memory of a time when a few influential leaders in another country wrecked the League of Nations on a similar pretext. Surely the nature of sovereignty is a subject of far more than mere academic importance, and we should be clear as to our definition of it and the grounds on which we base it.

The historic differences of opinion about sovereignty have usually concerned its real essence, whether a matter of law or of fact; the possibility or impossibility of limits to its exercise; or its proper seat, whether a state, a people, a king, a representative assembly, or a collegiate organ such as the English one composed of both king and parliament.

The solution we adopt of such important practical questions as these will in large part be due to our acceptance or nonacceptance of several fundamental distinctions.

Logically, the first of these is probably the question whether we should designate the supreme judicial organ or the supreme legislature as the sovereign body in any state. I take it that the modern answer to this question is clear and practically unanimous. It is unquestionably the legislative organ, for it can always override any decision of the courts. Sovereignty is now invariably thought of as *legislative* sovereignty. But it has not always been so considered. In fact it was never so until men finally realized that medieval promulgation had actually been superseded by modern legislation, and that realization came surprisingly late. In 1576 Bodin claimed, and probably with justice, that he was the first to see it clearly, and even he had failed to note it in his *Methodus,* published only ten years before.

All his great contemporaries, I believe, would have agreed with the Chancellor Michel de l'Hôpital that the chief mark of sovereignty must always be *"de judger et faire justice,"* as medieval men had thought.

However, when the new fact of legislation was once grasped, acceptance of Bodin's views soon became well-nigh universal, and this was as true of England as of the Continent. In the period from 1600 to the outbreak of civil war there was no political writer cited in England more often or more favorably than Jean Bodin. It is hardly too much to say that his conception of the nature of the state and of the supreme power within it had become the normal thought of Englishmen generally, and when objections were occasionally made to it, I find them more frequently on the Continent than in England.

In the conception of the state just referred to, Bodin made another contribution to political thought scarcely less significant than his recognition of the fact of legislation. He defined a "republic" as "a government," and in so doing repudiated the view held so generally by modern German theorists, that a government can never be more than a mere *"Träger der Staatsgewalt,"* while the real sovereignty

always resides in a kind of mystical body which we call the State.

"We shall not fear to think of the State as a unity, a personality, a sovereign—a sovereign in whose presence the visible ruler can aspire to no higher title than that of sovereign organ," says Jethro Brown in his book on *The Austinian Theory of Law*. I do fear to think thus of the state, particularly in view of the recent history of Germany.

This invariable ascription by Bodin of sovereignty to a "visible ruler," if justified, has the further effect of refuting such modern statements, for example, as Kern's, that the sovereignty of the Middle Ages was in reality the sovereignty not of the ruler but of the law itself. Then as now, it is true, men did recognize that law should always direct the sovereign in his government, and also that it may even set bounds to his authority; but actual government always necessarily implies will, and will is the function of men and only of men. Modern political developments have made it increasingly difficult for us to appreciate the true difference between medieval limitation of government and the direct control of it. Theories of sovereignty were then in abeyance largely because feudal decentralization made it difficult to find anywhere a supremacy of any kind.

Bodin's assertion that the sovereign in any state must always be a government has a further bearing upon modern political thought: it is a virtual denial of the view widely held that, whatever the government, the sovereignty must always remain in the people—the theory of "popular sovereignty." The legislative body, according to this theory, *is* the people, and the people are always the true sovereign. But the legislature obviously is *not* the people. The people are legally bound to obey the legislature's commands until these are repealed by the legislature itself, no matter how oppressive or unpopular they may be. The people may of course force the repeal of such unpopular laws in time, but until the legislature sees fit to act, the people will disobey them at their peril. Popular sovereignty is, in fact, possible only in a pure democracy without representative institutions—the only form of democracy recognized by Rousseau as legitimate—but, as usually employed, the phrase "popular sovereignty" contains a contradiction in terms; for, whether we like it or not, in choosing a legislature we are choosing a master, and because we choose it, it is no less a master than a monarch with hereditary title.

It is this theory of popular sovereignty, no doubt, which leads some to say that in the United States the true sovereignty today consists of the shifting and temporary majorities that at any given time are able to obtain an amendment to the Federal Constitution. But what a sovereign results! From 1804 to 1865 not a single such amendment

was ever adopted in the United States. This is a sleeping sovereign indeed. The upholders of such a theory as this are making the fatal mistake of confusing two very different things, the constituent action of a people in choosing a frame of government, and the governmental activity of the legislative organ created by the constitution so chosen.

Possibly it was Bodin's partial retention of medieval ideas which accounts for certain obvious limitations or defects in his theory when applied to modern states, some of which were noted within a generation or two of his own time. For one thing, his rigid doctrine of the indivisibility of sovereignty led him to deny sovereign authority to all mixed governments such as the English king in Parliament; a limitation condemned as early as 1606 by Henning Arnisaeus of Halberstadt in his *Doctrina Politica,* and, as I believe, completely refuted later by Philip Hunton. Hunton's little tract on monarchy, first published in 1643, has received scant justice at the hands of modern historians of political thought, but it is hard to escape his logic when he points out that any denial of sovereignty to such a corporate or collegiate body as the English king in Parliament is likewise a denial of the possibility of any corporate action of any kind among men and must apply as properly to every aristocracy or democracy in the world as to a mixed monarchy like England's. Filmer, it is true, did so apply it, and logically reduced all legitimate governments to the rule of one single man; but Bodin, on the other hand, like most political theorists of his time, had fully accepted democracy and aristocracy, as well as monarchy, among the possible forms of legitimate government.

Another important criticism of Bodin's theory of the state occurs in the brilliant treatise on *Seignories* of Charles Loyseau, which appeared in 1608. Bodin had set forth in his *République* the view that "he alone is sovereign absolutely who holds nothing of another." Loyseau, on the other hand, contends that the existence or non-existence of a sovereign authority does not depend thus upon the bare fact of vassalage, but upon the nature of the fief; and that a prince, even though the feudatory of another, does not thereby cease to be a sovereign, provided his person is not subject to another's jurisdiction and he himself retains the absolute authority over his own subjects. He holds, in short, that "the sovereignty is measured by the *seigneurie* and not by the *Seigneur,*" thus apparently making internal relations in a state the chief criterion of sovereignty and by implication excluding most of those we now include under our phrase "external sovereignty."

It was perhaps natural that such a question should still be discussed

in feudal terms in 1576 or 1608, while we habitually think of it in terms of the national state. Nevertheless, we still have with us the same problem, and there is probably no era in the past when the interrelation of states was more closely tied to the theories of sovereignty held within them than at the present day. The outcome has not always been a happy one, and I have often wondered whether it might not make for greater clearness if we could use entirely different terms for the internal and the external aspects of government and confine our word "sovereignty" to the former alone, as Loyseau did. This might seem an unimportant and wholly academic question, but it is on just such questions that differences have arisen in the past that in some cases have led to actual war. The effect of external restrictions created by treaty upon such an internal question as the definition of citizenship, in dispute between England and the South African Republic, must certainly be reckoned among the causes of the Boer War. If the proposed international Bill of Rights is ever adopted, we may expect many more such differences in the future.

Among the distinctions we must draw if we would understand the nature of sovereignty, its history, and its proper place in our thoughts about the state, I come in the last place to the distinction most fundamental of all, the one between a supremacy based upon law and that resulting from mere power.

That this is a valid and an important distinction, English history in the last few centuries is the abundant proof. If we were to look for the *power,* during a part of the sixteenth century at least, it would certainly be with the king; for a part of the eighteenth it was in the hands of an aristocracy—or, as some might prefer to say, an oligarchy; in the twentieth, as a result of the extension of the franchise, it belongs to the people. Yet, during this whole period, thus marked by these enormous shifts of power, the supreme authority to make law—*primum ac praecipuum caput majestatis,* as Bodin had termed it—was never changed: it remained throughout solely in the king in Parliament. These facts led Lord Bryce to make a distinction between "legal sovereignty" and what he termed "political sovereignty." The former of these is certainly sovereignty, the latter I should prefer to call mere power, rather than sovereignty of any sort. The important fact in this connection, however, is that the former is truly legal, not merely factual; it is based upon the ancient law, not upon the temporary accident of power. Here is the crux of the whole controversy between Austin and his opponents. It is also the main point of difference between Bodin and Hobbes.

The last of these statements, I know, has often been questioned.

Hobbes and Bodin are usually classed together among the advocates of absolutism. As Sir William Holdsworth said in 1912, "We do not think that Coke had fully grasped the doctrine of sovereignty as taught by Bodin and, after his day, by Hobbes."

If such an identification of the sovereignty of Hobbes and of Bodin is unwarranted, as I think it is, the mistake results from no misunderstanding of the theories of Hobbes—his absolutism is clear enough. It comes entirely from a failure to note certain aspects of Bodin's theory of sovereign authority.

It is true that Bodin's sovereign is *legibus solutus,* but it is not always sufficiently noted that in France such laws of which he is free do *not* include the law of God, the law of nature, or the fundamental laws of the monarchy; by these the king is bound. Unfortunately, however, those of which he is free *do* include the customary law of the land, whose origin Bodin and most of his contemporaries attribute to earlier kings and not to the people. Unlike the common law of England, always defended as the people's "birthright" never to be altered without their consent in Parliament, the French *coutume* had come by Bodin's day to be regarded as a royal and not a people's law, the work of earlier monarchs and therefore a law that a reigning king might change without consulting his Estates. Bodin, however, was more liberal than most of his contemporaries on one important point: he held that the right to property was not a customary but a natural right, protected by the unalterable law of nature and therefore beyond any king's authority to change.

Within the half century following the death of Bodin his feeble safeguard of natural right had been utterly swept away by the rising tide of absolutism in France, and by 1632 LeBret could assert with truth that the king by virtue of his absolute authority could levy *tailles* and subsidies upon his people "even without their consent." If we might judge from such historical results alone, we could scarcely deny that the outcome of Bodin's sovereignty had fully demonstrated its despotic tendency. His fatal admission that kings and not the people were the authors of the customary law of the land must probably be considered the chief of the intellectual roots of French absolutism. No wonder then that so many modern authorities with this in mind should see little to choose between the theories of Jean Bodin and the undoubted absolutism of the *Leviathan.*

And yet in his own day Bodin had protested with heat against this very charge, and his courageous defense of private property in the Estates of 1576 is proof of his sincerity. Notwithstanding the serious defects in his theory and their disastrous results, I cannot believe that

the conception of the state and of the supreme authority within it presented in Bodin's *République* is the one "taught . . . after his day by Hobbes." In the former the sovereign's authority is founded in law and bounded by law; in the latter, it follows automatically upon mere actual mastery. These two conceptions are in reality poles apart in essence, whatever may have been their common historical outcome. "It is authority, and not reason, which makes a law," Hobbes declared in his *Dialogue of the Common Laws of England.* Bodin, I believe, could never have made such a statement.

In his *Behemoth,* Hobbes also expresses his contempt for those who "dreamt of a mixed power of the King and the two Houses. That it was a divided power, in which there could be no peace was above their understanding."

The whole of English constitutional history from 1642 to the present day is proof of the accuracy of this statement if restricted thus to mere *power;* but when stretched to cover the sovereignty of the king in Parliament, it involves the denial of a legal doctrine held more or less consciously from medieval times to the present, a doctrine which on the whole had always been true to fact in England save in the few years of the interregnum of the seventeenth century. It was the anomalous situation in that short interval that constituted the basis for the political speculations of Hobbes. For the brief period of the Commonwealth and Protectorate his theory of sovereignty was accurate enough, but for no other part of English history since the Conquest.

In this connection I venture to repeat some statements made a good many years ago. If the Stuarts had been content with the moderate prerogative of Bodin or Eliot or Hale, instead of the extreme doctrines of Filmer, there would have been need for neither civil war nor revolution. Before 1642 it was nothing more than the tempered constitutional monarchy of Hale or Eliot for which the parliamentary leaders were struggling. It was only after hostilities had begun that the constitution was forgotten and actual mastery, not legal right, became the end to be achieved at any cost, and when the wars were over it was this actual mastery and not constitutional right which actually triumphed. It was therefore actual might, not constitutional right, which the Commonwealth and the Protectorate established; it was actual might, not constitutional right, on which Hobbes, with these facts before him, based the sovereignty in any state whatever. Thus, for Hobbes, Filmer's arbitrary royal power had come to be a power vested in either an assembly or a king, but none the less arbitrary for that. Hale or Eliot would have repudiated

all arbitrary government whatsoever, whether of a king or a parliament; Filmer had declared that any government in England must be both arbitrary and royal; for Hobbes it must be arbitrary but not necessarily royal; for many Whigs a century later it must be arbitrary but cannot be merely royal. Thus it seems that it is to the civil wars of the seventeenth century and not to the precedents of the original English constitution that we are indebted for the peculiar doctrine of political supremacy of Thomas Hobbes, a doctrine which enthrones might in place of right and can brook no limits to the arbitrary authority of the sovereign. It is not without significance that the great figure on the frontispiece of the *Leviathan,* armed with all the symbols of authority, should have a face not unlike the face of Oliver, but in no way resembling that of the late king. And it may not have been mere ambition that led Cromwell himself to toy with the idea of assuming the crown when so urged, in the first draft of the *Humble Petition and Advice.* If he had done so, some of his judges at least would have felt more secure than they did in their administration of the law of the land.

John Austin was no doubt thinking primarily of parliamentary government when he wrote his *Province of Jurisprudence Determined;* but it is hard indeed to see how he could possibly reconcile the existence of such a government, founded in law and sanctioned by centuries of history, with the statement in his book that whenever in any society a determinate person (or persons) *habitually* receives the obedience of "the bulk" of the members of that society, that person (or persons) must be considered to be the sovereign in that society. For in such a statement there is no question of law or of right. It is the mere physical fact of mastery, the actual existence and continuance of obedience, whether induced by consent or fear or force, which clothes those who happen to obtain it, no matter how or why they do obtain it, with the supreme authority in any state.

In what essential feature then, it might be asked, does a sovereignty such as this differ from the teachings of Thomas Hobbes; in what important respect, if any, does it resemble the traditional authority of the English king in Parliament?

It is no doubt true that, in the strictness of English law, the principle is unquestionable that the Parliament is not only "absolute," but that it may lawfully be arbitrary; but to admit this is not to say that this unbounded authority results from the "habitual" obedience of the English people: it comes from the immemorial law of the land.

It must also be conceded that at times in the past some of Parliament's actions have been truly arbitrary; and Burke was probably

justified in 1770 when he said "the distempers of parliament" had become "the great subjects of apprehension and redress." That "redress" came in the course of time, not in the form of law alone, but also in the conventions of the constitution so admirably described by Bagehot. As a result, the legal omnipotence of Parliament has become little more than a harmless fiction, and what makes it so is the existence of responsible government. It is true, then, politically, and as a matter of fact, that the permanence of England's form of government rests upon the "habitual" obedience of the English people, and this may account for Austin's making it the basis of his theory of sovereignty; but it is true politically only and not legally; and if for any reason the people should wish to withdraw their obedience, they could do it in no legal way, but only by revolution, as they did in 1688. They must either obey the government or destroy it. Parliament is not the sovereign because the people obey it; they obey it because it is the sovereign.

THE POSITIVISM OF MR. JUSTICE HOLMES

Mark DeWolfe Howe

On the occasion of the ninetieth birthday of Mr. Justice Holmes, his successor on the Supreme Court of the United States said that Holmes was "for all students of the law and for all students of human society the philosopher and seer, the greatest of our age in the domain of jurisprudence, and one of the greatest of the ages." At the conclusion of his essay, Mr. Justice Cardozo quoted from a letter which he had received from Holmes, saying that he had always believed that neither place, nor power, nor popularity "makes the success that one desires, but the trembling hope that one has come near to an ideal." Mr. Justice Cardozo was reminded by these words of the wistful confidence of Keats: "I think I shall be among the English poets after my death." And Cardozo went on to say that "there was no fool's paradise for Keats" and to predict that there would be none for Holmes.

Nearly twenty years have passed since Cardozo predicted that Holmes's trembling hope would be realized, and it is time to inquire whether the prediction has been fulfilled. Though many would think it obvious that time has done nothing to diminish the stature of Holmes, there have, in recent years, been such frequent efforts to belittle his reputation, to discredit his philosophy of law, and to disparage his achievements as judge that Cardozo's prediction cannot be considered as wholly fulfilled.

The first elaborate formulation of the thesis that Holmes's philosophy of law is antidemocratic, un-American, and totalitarian in tendency was in an essay by Father John C. Ford, published in 1941 in the *Proceedings of the Jesuit Philosophical Association*. A year later it was restated in the *Georgetown Law Journal* by Father Francis E. Lucey. The next article in which the criticism of Holmes was repeated was that by Ben W. Palmer which appeared in the *American Bar Association Journal* under the somewhat flashy title, "Hobbes, Holmes, and Hitler."

It is not my purpose here to deal with these particular efforts to persuade people that the philosophy of Holmes was repugnant to the principles of American civilization. The criticism of Holmes with which I shall deal and which I can discuss without becoming unpleasantly involved in theological dispute is that which has been most effectively stated by Professor Lon Fuller of the Harvard Law School. To date Professor Fuller has not directed his attention to the work of Holmes as judge and has discussed only the shortcomings of his philosophy of law as expressed in writings other than his judicial opinions. This, I believe, makes it suitable that I should accept these same limits. I am sure that Professor Fuller and I would agree that no final estimate of Holmes's stature may be made until his career on the bench is taken into account. Whether we should agree or disagree in estimating his effectiveness and importance as a judge I cannot say, though there are clear intimations in Professor Fuller's writing that he has found the same disappointment in Holmes as judge which he has felt in him as philosopher. Upon that issue, however, I shall not touch.

I am strongly persuaded that Professor Fuller has expressed in his writing on Holmes a point of view which many lawyers have come, perhaps unconsciously, to share—a feeling not only that Holmes's philosophy of law was inconsistent with the highest traditions and aspirations of Western thought, but a feeling that his scale of moral and political values was badly suited to measure the needs of a progressive and civilized society. As I understand Professor Fuller's thesis, it is that Holmes, child of Hobbes, is the American father of legal positivism. By positivism in law Professor Fuller tells us that he means "that direction of legal thought which insists on drawing a sharp distinction between the law *that is* and the law *that ought to be.*" The justification for classifying Holmes as a positivist, within this definition, is found by Professor Fuller in many of Holmes's utterances, perhaps nowhere more clearly than in passages from his well-known address on "The Path of the Law," in which he told his audience, first, that the student of law must come to recognize as fundamental the distinction between law and morality, and, second, that law was not usefully to be defined in terms of right and wrong and the principles of ethics, but should be considered to be nothing more esoteric than an informed and prophetic judgment as to what the courts will do in fact. With that positivist tendency in Holmes's thought Professor Fuller contrasts the philosophy of natural law—"the view which denies the possibility of a rigid separation of the *is* and the *ought,* and which tolerates a confusion of them in legal

discussion." He asks the present generation of lawyers to abandon the positivism of Holmes and to return to the earlier and more healthy conviction that there is nothing shameful in the association of law and morality.

My first concern will not be with the merits of the philosophical issue which Professor Fuller has so persuasively presented. It will rather be with a problem upon which he touched in passing—that is, the reason which prompted Holmes to accept the positivist theory of law. When Hobbes first formulated the principles of positivism, he gave an explicit reason for his effort to separate the domain of morals from the province of jurisprudence; he wanted men to obey even those rules of law which they believed to be unjust. Holmes, says Professor Fuller, never made it clear what prompted him to accept the dichotomy and has thus made our task of comprehension peculiarly difficult. He suggests, however, that Holmes's Civil War experience bred or encouraged a romantic if not sentimental enthusiasm for the heroism of obedience, a respect for authority as such which is common to the positivist philosopher and to the loyal soldier. Though Professor Fuller does not quote Holmes's most famous pronouncement on the virtue of the soldier's faith, preferring to let Tennyson speak for the positivists, he undoubtedly had the passage in mind. In a Memorial Day speech, delivered in 1895, Holmes had spoken these words:

> I do not know what is true. I do not know the meaning of the universe. But in the midst of doubt, in the collapse of creeds, there is one thing I do not doubt, that no man who lives in the same world with most of us can doubt, and that is that the faith is true and adorable which leads a soldier to throw away his life in obedience to a blindly accepted duty, in a cause which he little understands, in a plan of campaign of which he has no notion, under tactics of which he does not see the use.

I should not hesitate for a moment to agree that this passage reflects most significantly the mixing of skepticism and romanticism in Holmes's faith. My disagreement with Professor Fuller is with his suggestion that, when Holmes spoke thus romantically of the soldier's sustaining faith, he was indirectly committing himself to a positivist theory of law which says, according to Professor Fuller, that lines must be drawn between the *is* and the *ought,* and which puts fiat above reason in the legal process.

Before one can discuss Holmes's theory of law one must, I believe, consider his theory of morality, and in order to comprehend his principles of ethics with any understanding one must look at the circumstances in which his mind and character came to their maturity.

Catherine Drinker Bowen in her book, *Yankee from Olympus,* has popularized the notion that Dr. Holmes, the Justice's bouncing father, was an insignificant figure of such consuming personal vanity and petty conceit that his son gained no significant profit from growing up in his household. This, I may say, is a most misleading picture of the Doctor and a completely inadequate interpretation of the relation between father and son. It disregards entirely the fact that Dr. Holmes, throughout his whole life, vigorously was struggling to break away from the oppressive traditions by which American thought and American morality had, in his father's generation, been so effectively suffocated. Perhaps the Doctor was never able to shake himself entirely free from those traditions—he refused to read novels on Sunday—but with respect to the basic intellectual and moral issues of his day he stood invariably with those men of vision who insisted that the questions which the advance of science had put to man should not be answered by the outworn formulae of Calvinism and the threadbare precepts of Protestant morality. The seeds of skepticism which had been planted in the mind of the medical student in Paris blossomed in the maturity of the novelist and essayist who asked of the old order whether its settled pieties had any other justification than familiarity. When he suggested that the sin of Elsie Venner might find a truer explanation and a more Christian understanding if its sources were approached through science rather than through Calvinism he was asking that skepticism be given rights. He saw the American's obligation to re-examine every article of national faith, whether political or religious, as persistent and inescapable.

> To think [he said] of trying to waterproof the American mind against the questions that Heaven rains down upon it shows a misapprehension of our new conditions. If to question everything be unlawful and dangerous, we had better undeclare our independence at once; for what the Declaration means is the right to question everything, even the truth of its own fundamental proposition.

An alert young man brought up in a household presided over by a father so wholeheartedly dedicated to the cause of free inquiry could scarcely fail to start his life with the conviction that the first consequence of the scientific revolution must be the development of a skeptical mind.

Nurtured in that belief, Holmes must have found many, if not all, of the aspects of the Harvard College which he entered in the fall of 1858 hopelessly benighted. The sponge of complacency with which Professor Francis Bowen, Professor of Natural Religion, Moral

Philosophy, and Civil Polity, erased the writing on the wall was the product of Harvard's stubborn assurance that reason and morality, religion and piety had discovered the final answers to the mysteries of the universe and that the teacher's responsibility to his student was to explain those answers and develop an appropriate humility before the altar of unalterable truth. When Professor Bowen was asked in the spring of 1859 whether he would write a review of Darwin's *Origin of Species,* he replied that he considered that the effort would not be justified, since all interest in the book would have passed before the requested review would appear in July. In his course in political economy, Bowen instructed his students in the laws of nature by which the economic and the moral life of man was governed. Is it any surprise that the young Holmes, encouraged by his father to ask on all occasions the unanswerable question, in his senior year had to be publicly admonished by President Felton for "repeated and gross indecorum in the recitation room of Professor Bowen"? In his junior year, Holmes had written an undergraduate essay in which he had offended the pieties of his teachers in suggesting that "duty is not less binding had the Bible never been written, or if we were to perish utterly tomorrow." This rather pallid expression of skepticism aroused the anger of a more orthodox classmate, who published a protest against the Emersonian tendencies of Holmes's thought, and suggested that his ideas were "barbarous in the province of reason and practical piety." It is not unlikely that the satisfaction which Holmes found in disturbing the intellectual tranquilities of his teachers and his fellow students added fresh impetus to the skeptical instinct. It is certain, in any case, that his reading as an undergraduate followed those frontiers of inquiry to which the scientific impulse was carrying philosophical and ethical speculation.

As Holmes's college course came to its end, he found himself under the influence of his father and his times, far from the moorings of religious faith which his New England ancestors had laid and to which most of his contemporaries were still fixed. Having lost all confidence that moral convictions may find sufficient justification in the dogma of religion, Holmes's search was for a system of philosophy, or, if you will, for a way of life which would give some assurance that a sense of duty had validity in a universe which must be explained in scientific terms. Where the normal processes of intellectual growth would have led him had all tranquility not been shattered by the outbreak of the Civil War, no one can say. It is my guess that his early admiration for Emerson might have led him to attempt

to systematize the Emersonian insights and that out of that effort might have come a philosophy quite different from that which the circumstances of war in fact produced. That, however, is the idlest of speculation, for the war did come, and with it the need for again examining the foundations of morality.

In his later life, Holmes on frequent occasions indicated that he had small sympathy for men of strong belief; in particular, he came to distrust the crusading spirit of the reformer which, in its dedication to one end, so oversimplifies the complexities of life that it loses sight of others. Of women reformers he was particularly scornful, speaking of them as "those dear little proper geese that follow their propaganda." But when the Civil War broke out, Holmes, it is clear, was moved to join the Union forces by an abolitionist fervor. He acknowledged later that he shared the emotional state of the abolitionists—a state which he came to dislike because, as he said, "it catches postulates like the influenza." I am not concerned at the moment, however, with the later development of Holmes's thought, but with the significant fact that the young man who, during his college course, had come to the conviction that morality could no longer find its justification in a theology which science had shown to be unacceptable, went to war convinced that the cause for which he fought was noble and right. It may even be said, I think, that he went in a spirit of some defiance, anxious to prove to a complacent older generation that a skeptic in religion was not necessarily a skeptic in other things, and that though science had turned the creed of Harvard and of his ancestors to dust and ashes the Puritan's standard of morality and duty still survived. In the very thick of the war he wrote to Charles Eliot Norton that it was only by preserving his conviction that the war was the holy crusade of the nineteenth century that he was able to keep his hand to the sword. Certainly there is no indication that at the opening of the war Holmes had become a skeptic in matters of morality. His father's influence had carried him far on the way to emancipation from tradition, it had led him to repudiate the religious and the intellectual assumptions upon which Harvard's proprieties and Boston's decencies were built, but it had not led him to doubt seriously whether the accepted standards of behavior had an external or preordained validity. Those to whom postulates are as catching as the influenza are unlikely to look skeptically upon the disease and are susceptible to its infection simply because of the conviction that each postulate reflects at least a facet of the cosmic truth.

If Holmes went to the war a convinced abolitionist, what was it

that led him thirty-four years later when speaking of the soldier's faith to say categorically: "I do not know what is true. I do not know the meaning of the universe"? The answer to this question is not, I believe, to be found in the maturing process of the intervening years, setting the young man's crusade in historical perspective. It is rather to be found in the drama of the Civil War itself—a drama so vast in its political and physical aspects that one easily overlooks its no less exciting and confusing moral aspects. All civil wars involve issues of a complexity vastly greater than that of the most total of international wars. The Civil War of 1861-65 was the most complex of all civil wars. In the Twentieth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers, which Holmes joined immediately after his graduation, was reflected the national confusion and the whole uncertainty of purpose by which the Union effort from first to last was frustrated. Among the officers with whom Holmes was most intimately associated was his classmate Penrose Hallowell, Quaker and abolitionist, whose religious convictions condemned war and whose reforming faith made participation in war seem necessary. Another friend was William Francis Bartlett, who at the time of his enlistment had written in his diary that if he fought in the war it would be fighting against his principles, since he had from the first supported the Confederate cause. When Southern classmates had left Harvard a few months before the fall of Sumter, eager to join the Confederate forces, Bartlett had recorded the sadness with which he saw them leave. "However far we may be separated," he wrote, "or however hostile may be our respective countries, we have sworn that our friendship will never grow cold." Doubting the justice of the Northern cause, Bartlett fought gallantly with its armies, losing a leg with the Twentieth Regiment, returning to command another regiment of volunteers, and ultimately rising to the rank of major general at the age of twenty-five. Of other friends, the most intimate was Henry Abbott. From the very first he proclaimed himself a Copperhead, throughout the war cursed the purposes and abilities of Lincoln, condemned the strategy of the Northern armies, and denounced the emancipation of the slaves as unconstitutional. Yet he fought with supreme gallantry in every battle in which the Twentieth was engaged, refused promotion which would have taken him to safer posts, and when he finally fell in the Wilderness was mourned by generals and privates as their heroic brother.

Read in this context of association and experience, Holmes's Memorial Day speech takes on, I suggest, a very different meaning from that which his latter-day critics have given it. The young man

had joined the army in the conviction that the cause of abolition made the Civil War the moral crusade of the nineteenth century. He found that those who saw it as the blundering effort of politicians to achieve through force ends which were beyond the constitutional limits of their power were capable of a selfless heroism, equaling, if not exceeding, his own. What wonder is there, then, that such a young man, already skeptical in matters of religious faith, should find himself at the war's end doubtful that his own conception of what was right had cosmic significance? Perhaps a man of relentless rationalism, having discovered that he neither knows what is true nor can solve the riddle of the universe, would have been satisfied to settle down, cushioned by his skepticism, to observe the silly antics of mankind—affirming nothing, denying nothing. Perhaps a man of firmer complacency would have returned from the war convinced that the greater sacrifices which wounded and dead comrades had made for the cause as they saw it were less significant than the sacrifices which he had made for the cause as he had seen it. But it is not surprising that a sensitive spirit and a skeptical mind, remembering such friends as Henry Abbott, gave neither the cynical nor the complacent answer to the problem of intense experience, and came out of the war, despite all doubt, convinced of one truth—

> . . . that the faith is true and adorable which leads a soldier to throw away his life in obedience to a blindly accepted duty, in a cause which he little understands, in a plan of campaign of which he has no notion, under tactics of which he does not see the use.

To read Holmes's Memorial Day address as the creed of an authoritarian is totally to disregard its context; to suggest that he there was saying that might makes right, that the *is* is more important than the *ought,* distorts his thesis beyond recognition. It is to read his eloquent address to veterans as if it were a law review article on jurisprudence. This is not to say that Holmes never permitted oratory to get the better of judgment, or to deny that he let himself too frequently use the language of arms to dispose of questions of morality; it is only to ask that we take appropriate account of the influence which the experience of civil war had in molding the contour of his skepticism.

If my interpretation of Holmes's intellectual development is accepted, it means that when he began the study of law in the fall of 1864, he had passed through two decisive phases of his growth. First, he had shaken off the religious faith on which so many of the assumptions of the world around him were based, and, second, he

had learned from war that personal certitude is not the test of cosmic certainty. Skeptic in faith and skeptic in morals, he quickly found, however, that the world around him, particularly the world of legal theory in which he moved at the Harvard Law School, was heavy with the stagnant complacency of the prewar years. The law in books was a conglomerate of the artificial reason of Coke's admiring and the moral aphorisms of Kent's devotion. Outside of books, the law, to be sure, was less burdened with artificiality and piety, for such judges as Shaw in Massachusetts and Gibson in Pennsylvania had shown that good sense and the adjustment of English principle to American reality could make the law an effective instrument of government. Yet the words of Rufus Choate, spoken to the prewar generation, still struck chords of sympathy in the minds of the postwar generation of lawyers. Choate had insisted that our national need was for "reformation of our individual selves," not for reform of our legal institutions. "No, no," he had cried out in 1845.

> Government substantially as it is; jurisprudence substantially as it is; the general arrangements of liberty substantially as they are; the Constitution and the Union exactly as they are—this is to be wise, according to the wisdom of America.

Choate had proceeded in the same speech to describe the body of the law which he considered so deserving of preservation:

> No man now living helped to make much of it. The judge does not make it. Like the structure of the state itself, we found it around us at the earliest dawn of reason, it guarded the helplessness of our infancy, it restrained the passion of our youth, it protects the acquisitions of our manhood, it shields the sanctity of the grave, it executes the will of the departed. Invisible, omnipresent, a real yet impalpable existence, it seems more a spirit, an abstraction, the whispered yet authoritative voice of all the past and all the good—than like the transient contrivance of altogether such as ourselves.

It is difficult for the present generation of lawyers to realize that when Choate spoke in these terms he was not simply indulging his passionate weakness for oratory, but was defining the prevailing concept of law. That concept was not appreciably shaken for most American lawyers until the 1880's. That it was shaken then was due to the same kind of enlightenment which in matters of theology had occurred before the middle of the century. It stemmed primarily, perhaps, from the effort of Sir Henry Maine and others of the historical school to examine the institutions of the law with the same scientific detachment which Darwin had shown in examining the physical world around him. It was, of course, inevitable that Holmes, if he could be persuaded that law offered the same opportunity for

generalization which the new philosophy and the new science offered, would join those scattered forces which were seeking to rid the law of its analytical and moral dogmatism. His first struggle was to persuade himself that the law did offer large opportunities for creative speculation. Shortly after the end of his law school course, if not earlier, he became convinced that the satisfaction which his philosophical instinct was seeking could be found in the law. During the fifteen years which passed between his graduation and his first appointment to judicial office, his energies were dedicated to the task of showing that a critically accurate understanding of the law would be possible only after two steps had been taken. First, its analytical traditions must be subjected to the same rigorous and skeptical inspection to which science had subjected theology. Second, its moral postulates, imbedded in the old complacency, must be re-examined without fear and without deference to settled pieties.

I need not discuss the first efforts which he made in essays and in book reviews to achieve those tasks. The fruits of all those efforts were brought together in his volume *The Common Law*. The most significant achievements of that book seem to me to have been two. He made it impossible for later generations of lawyers to accept as valid Coke's maxim that "reason is the life of the law," and compelled them instead to accept as true the conflicting maxim that "the life of the law has not been logic; it has been experience." He thus led American legal scholarship to follow the historical rather than the purely logical—even theological—methods which had threatened to dominate legal thought. The other achievement, less apparent though it may have been, was no less significant. It was to call attention to the fact that, though moral conceptions had been of predominant importance in the initial formulation of rules of law, time and experience had given to the language of morality as it survives in law a meaning substantially different from that which it originally possessed. In the first cases in which such moral concepts as those of "fraud," "malice," and negligence" had been fruitfully utilized, the concepts had relatively clear dimensions. As time had passed, however, the words had lingered in the law, still laden with deceptive implications of morality, but infused with a new meaning and serving new purposes. Generalizing the tendency of growth, he found that the terms of subjective morality had acquired in the law an objective meaning quite different from that which they had at first possessed.

So far as I know, the latter-day critics of Holmes do not cite *The Common Law* to show that his creed was that of the positivist who

asserts that law must concern itself exclusively with the *is* and never bother itself with the *ought*. Yet his address on "The Path of the Law," to which they have so frequently taken exception, says little if anything more than what he had already said in *The Common Law*. The differences in emphasis are largely the result of the fact that *The Common Law* was a volume written for sophisticated and mature lawyers, whereas "The Path of the Law" was an address to students. Each effort, however, was the expression of the same philosophical concern of which I have already spoken. In talking to students, Holmes asked them at the outset to look behind the surface of traditional definitions to the stuff of the law. For generations, students had been told that law is "a system of reason" and had been charged by their elders to remember that it is "a deduction from principles of ethics." We may have forgotten the words of Rufus Choate, but to the audience which Holmes addressed, the suggestion that the invisible and omnipresent law was "the whispered yet authoritative voice of all the past and all the good" still had persuasive eloquence. Read with appreciation of the circumstances in which the address was delivered, "The Path of the Law" is anything but the formulation of a totalitarian creed; it is a philosopher's plea that theory should be founded in fact, a historian's argument that experience tells more of truth than does eloquence.

The passages in the address to which Holmes's critics have taken most frequent objection opened with the suggestion that it was desirable to dispel a prevailing confusion between morality and law. In order to dramatize the suggestion, he urged that the student should look at the law from the standpoint of the bad man—a hypothetical figure who was concerned neither with moral right nor with moral wrong, and whose only interest was in knowing what sanctions society might bring to bear upon him if he followed a course of lawless conduct. Such a man, Holmes indicated, might have a more accurate understanding of the meaning in law of such words as "fraud," "malice" and "intent" than a student nurtured in the pieties of Rufus Choate. If Holmes's historical analysis in *The Common Law* was accurate and perceptive, I find it hard to see how his dramatic reiteration of the same analysis in "The Path of the Law" became totalitarian. Professor Fuller and Holmes's other critics have not, so far as I know, argued that he was mistaken in saying that the language of morality when used in the law loses much of its ethical content. When Holmes's critics show that he was wrong in that matter, it will be time for them to show the error of his philosophical ways. While that thesis remains unrefuted, however, the friends of

Holmes are likely to believe that the current criticism of his views is founded either in misunderstanding of his argument or in an unimaginative, literal-minded reading of his address.

The misinterpretation seems almost willful when one remembers that Holmes prefaced his argument with the following paragraph:

> I take it for granted that no hearer of mine will misinterpret what I have to say as the language of cynicism. The law is the witness and the external deposit of our moral life. Its history is the history of the moral development of the race. . . . When I emphasize the difference between law and morals I do so with reference to a single end, that of learning and understanding the law. For that purpose you must definitely master its specific marks, and it is for that I ask you for the moment to imagine yourselves indifferent to other and greater things.

Is this, I ask you, the language of one who sought to make law a matter not of reason but of fiat and who was not concerned with questions of the *ought* and only interested in the *is*? Does it indicate a repudiation of the conviction so firmly stated in *The Common Law* that "rules of law are or should be based upon a morality which is generally accepted"? Professor Fuller says nothing of this prefatory caution nor does he refer to that other passage in "The Path of the Law" in which his positivist villain spoke of the direction which he thought the path should follow.

> I look forward [said Holmes] to the time when the part played by history in the explanation of dogma shall be very small, and instead of ingenious research we shall spend our energy on a study of the ends sought to be attained and the reasons for desiring them.

Professor Fuller has not, of course, overlooked such passages as those which I quote. He dismisses them with the casual statement that Holmes "did not always remain faithful to the program of a rigid separation of law and morals laid down in his early essays." It is my thesis that Holmes never laid down the program which Professor Fuller ascribes to him, that from first to last he insisted that the ultimate source of law is the moral judgment of the community. He felt, however, that understanding of the law would be more perceptive than it had been if one saw morality as its source rather than its content. If Holmes's critics would limit their efforts to the task of showing that that conviction was mistaken, they might succeed; but this success would not establish their present thesis that his philosophical concern was solely with the *is* and never with the *ought*.

Professor Fuller, with others, treats Holmes's definition of law—the prediction of what the courts will do in fact—as another aspect of

the positivist's refusal to let conceptions of morality play their appropriate part in the legal process. Once more, I may say, this seems to involve an almost willful refusal to understand his thesis and his definition. Believing as he did that "the law is the witness and external deposit of our moral life," it is inconceivable that he should ask lawyers to leave out of their predictions as to what courts might be expected to do in fact—in other words out of their consideration of law—all consideration of the influence of morality on the minds of judges and jurors. What he was asking was that lawyers and judges should think things and not words, and become conscious of their responsibility to bring decisions into conformity to current standards of morality. Holmes once said that the strength of Mr. Chief Justice Shaw lay in his "accurate appreciation of the requirements of the community whose officer he was," and that few judges "have lived who were his equals in their understanding of the grounds of public policy to which all laws must ultimately be referred." In "The Path of the Law," the alleged source of all infection, Holmes spoke of the utility of history, and described its use by lawyers as "the first step toward an enlightened skepticism, that is, towards a deliberate reconsideration of the worth" of rules of law.

> It is revolting [he went on to say] to have no better reason for a rule of law than that so it was laid down in the time of Henry IV. It is still more revolting if the grounds upon which it was laid down have vanished long since, and the rule simply persists from the blind imitation of the past.

Remembering such utterances as these, how is it possible to accept Professor Fuller's statement that Holmes's "avowed purpose" was "to cut the law loose from the ethical considerations that have shaped it"?

The critics of Holmes might, perhaps, admit that they have exaggerated the amorality of his theory of law. Should they make that admission, I believe that they would return to the assault on other lines of battle. They would tell us, first, that the effort which he made to look at law from the bad man's point of view added nothing to our understanding of its character. I should be willing to admit that if his effort is read as an attempt to reach the heart of a philosophical problem it was not entirely successful. It usually takes something more than a shift in emphasis to achieve profound insight. What Holmes was doing, as I see it, was to put the familiar and valid thesis of *The Common Law* in dramatic terms, to suggest to his audience that their understanding of law would be more penetrating if they washed its precepts in cynical acid and, in doing so, discovered that

its language of subjective morality was deceptive. Perhaps his effort was an artistic failure, possibly the dramatic image of the bad man was bound to distract the attention both of the speaker and the audience from the philosophic point in issue. If Holmes's failure was merely artistic, however, criticism of his effort should be concerned with that failure and not with the thesis which he sought to establish.

The other line of attack which I believe that Holmes's critics might be expected to follow would be the assertion that, whatever his own philosophy may have been, he put it in such terms as to encourage his disciples to the commission of philosophic sin. By asking lawyers to think of themselves as bad men, by urging them to separate law and morality, by telling them that law is simply a prediction of what courts will do in fact, he started the train of positivism on its journey to cynicism. This visiting of the sins of the children upon their father seems to me a somewhat harsh sentence, particularly when it is imposed by the philosophers who ask that morality should play a part in law. If the misinterpretations of Holmes's beliefs by some of his disciples have been similar to those of his critics, the primary blame is on disciples and critics alike and not on Holmes. Again, however, I think it only proper to acknowledge that Holmes may deserve some blame for crediting his audience with an imagination greater than they possessed. Though I have spoken of his distrust of the rhetorical excesses of Rufus Choate, he himself was an effective orator and allowed himself too frequently, perhaps, to express philosophic doctrines of great subtlety in the dramatic language of oratory. To say this, however, is only to repeat my earlier point that legitimate artistic criticism is not necessarily valid philosophic criticism.

If my efforts have met with any success, I trust that I may have justified my conviction that Holmes did not deny that a primary source of law is the realm of moral standards in which society has its being. I trust also that you are persuaded that he considered the first responsibility of the lawyer and judge to be that of bringing the law into conformity with those moral standards. Some, however, are likely to ask whether this deference to morality had any substantial significance if Holmes denied, as he did, that our moral standards have objective—or, as he liked to say, cosmic—significance. Those persons whose articles of religious faith include the conviction that the law of nature has real existence and that virtue, as we conceive it, lies at the heart of reality are compelled, of course, to believe that when Holmes repudiated the absolute in morals he destroyed the ethical foundations of the law. For those others of us, however, who doubt the cosmic significance of human values, I wonder whether the

rejection of the absolute necessarily entails such destructive consequences. May not the value which is merely human have an influence on law as decisive as that which is gloriously absolute? Only if people are persuaded that it may, will it be possible for them to accept the interpretation of Holmes's philosophy of law which I urge. For if it is their belief that standards of behavior which are sustained by human sanctions only may not lay claim to the honors of morality, then Holmes, by giving no other support to those standards than the taste and preference of men, denied that morality is a source of law.

None of Holmes's serious critics has charged him with cynicism. As Professor Fuller has pointed out, he found it possible to escape the despair which might seem the natural consequences of total skepticism by a romantic faith in the fruitfulness of struggle and of action. By putting his faith in the language of arms he used a tongue which to our generation is distasteful. I see no reason, however, for holding the language which experience made natural to him too much against him. His temperament, like ours, demanded some form of assurance that things are, or at least may be, better than they seem to the eye of reason. The experience of the Civil War, the memory of friends who had died for causes which they did not understand, provided him with the materials for faith. We might find that faith more lovable if its context had been less military. But we who are also seeking for a faith which will give us protection from our own skepticism should not be hypercritical of one whose search was inspired by impulses like our own. I wonder, in the end, whether a revived though pallid faith in the law of nature is not less healthy than his. If we should accept it, are we not likely soon to find ourselves not only allied with those who repudiate the achievements of skepticism but also eager ourselves to rediscover the comforts of the absolute? If that eagerness becomes predominant in our philosophy, we shall be obliged once more to free ourselves from the old shackles. We would do better, I believe, to stay with Holmes's faith and not lose his skepticism than to repudiate both. His soldier's faith taught him at least one lesson which has persistent validity. Through that faith, he once said, he had

> . . . learned that whether a man accepts from Fortune her spade, and will look downward and dig, or from Aspiration her axe and cord, and will scale the ice, the one and only success which it is his to command is to bring to his work a mighty heart.

THE UNIVERSITY AND THE MIND OF THE AGE

Robert M. Hutchins

THE AMERICAN university is a perplexing phenomenon. Almost all the things that are said about it are meaningless. Some of them sound good; but what are they intended to convey? Or if they are intended to convey something, how can what they are intended to convey be done? I read in the Report of Twenty Years of the Chancellor of the University of Chicago that a university should be a beacon, rather than a mirror; that it should illuminate, rather than reflect. What does it mean to be a beacon? How can a university be a beacon? How can it illuminate what?

In a paper written for another important educational anniversary, the tercentenary of Harvard, Alfred North Whitehead says that the task of the universities is intellectual leadership and proposes that Harvard should fashion the mind of the twentieth century as the University of Paris fashioned that of the Middle Ages.

It occurred to me at the time of the publication of Mr. Whitehead's article that it was not Harvard that was fashioning the mind of the twentieth century; it was Teachers College, Columbia. But then I asked myself whether Teachers College was fashioning or reflecting the mind of the twentieth century, and came to the conclusion it was the latter. The faith that all problems will yield to scientific method, together with a vast confusion about what that method is; the doctrine that education is adjustment to the environment; the notion that we should at the same time develop our individualities and "socialize" ourselves; the program of ever richer secular progress and ever greater indifference to the claims of the intellect and the spirit—these were all there in the mind of the twentieth century. Teachers College did not originate them or lead the country to accept them. It found them, endorsed them, and flourished because of them.

Then I asked myself whether the universities had ever exerted intellectual leadership or had ever fashioned the mind of any epoch except the Middle Ages. Since the universities were not established

till the Middle Ages, they could not have fashioned the mind of the ages before. As to the ages afterward, their minds were fashioned by individual men, or by small groups of men, most of whom were not associated with universities. One of the most striking things about the works that have made the minds of various ages is that almost none of them were written by professors. And where they were written by men who were sheltered by universities, the men and not the universities were responsible. That Newton worked at Cambridge should not blind us to the fact that in his day the British universities were sinking into a deep torpor, probably brought on by port, from which they were not to awaken for more than a hundred and fifty years. The influences that have been most effective on a world scale in fashioning the mind of the twentieth century up to now are Marx, Darwin, and Freud, not Heidelberg, Oxford, or the Sorbonne.

Ever since Mr. Whitehead's article appeared I have been trying to figure out how it was that the universities fashioned the mind of the Middle Ages when they have not been able to do so since. In order to discover whether the universities can exert intellectual leadership again, we have to find out how they did so once. Mr. Whitehead's answer is *suggestiveness*. They did it by suggestiveness, and suggestiveness comes from action. So Mr. Whitehead said that the way Harvard could do for modern times what the University of Paris did for the Middle Ages was to absorb into itself those schools of vocational training for which systematized understanding has importance.

This answer seemed inadequate to me thirteen years ago and has grown more so with every passing day. If this is all there is to it, the American universities should long since have fashioned the mind of this age, for they have absorbed into themselves not only all those vocational schools for which systematized understanding has importance, but also every other vocational school, so that the ordinary American university presents an array of vocational schools of incredible variety and insignificance.

What is important for us is not the fact that the medieval universities entered into the life of their time, but the way in which they did it. In the Middle Ages the whole university was both speculative and practical. The insight that produced this organization was that everything speculative has significance in the practical dimension, and everything practical, to be worth study, must have a speculative basis. The purpose for which any action was studied or taught was to increase the understanding of that action and what it implied. Not every occupation was a profession in the Middle Ages. A profession was a body of men trained in a subject matter that had

intellectual content in its own right. The aim of the group was the common good. The universities of the Middle Ages did not enter into the life of their time through having schools that actually or ostensibly prepared men for vocations, but through a combination of the speculative and the practical that made the two indistinguishable as subjects of study and teaching.

The disciplines of the Middle Ages were studied together because they must be lived together. Professors and students had a common heritage in the tradition of learning. They had a common training in the methods and techniques appropriate to each discipline. They did not necessarily agree on what ideas were basic, but they did have a common acquaintance with the ideas that could seriously claim to be basic and a commensurate ability, derived from a common training, to appraise and understand those ideas. The characteristic intellectual apparatus of the medieval university, as Mill nostalgically points out in his essay *On Liberty,* was the disputation.

If it is these features of the medieval university, rather than its specifically vocational interests, that helped the University of Paris to fashion the mind of the Middle Ages, we can understand why no universities since the Middle Ages have been able to duplicate the accomplishments of those which existed then.

In the essay that he wrote for the Harvard tercentenary, Etienne Gilson pointed out that the scholars of the Middle Ages wanted to universalize the faith. They had a strong belief in the universal character of rational truth. "Since faith could not possibly be proved by reason," Mr. Gilson says, "the only hope of universalizing it was to make it acceptable to reason . . ." The method of seeking to make faith acceptable to reason was endless argumentation. Mr. Gilson concludes: "Thus did it come to pass that, viewing themselves as members of the same spiritual family, using a common language to impart to others the same fundamental truth, those medieval scholars succeeded in living and working together for about three centuries, and so long as they did, there was in the world, together with a vivid feeling for the universal character of truth, some sort of Occidental unity."

The end of the Middle Ages brought with it great gains in every field of knowledge, except possibly philosophy and theology. The medieval period had been an age of debate. What followed was age upon age of discovery. Inquiry was promoted by specialization and the experimental method. In the Middle Ages the members of the University of Paris thought together. The subjects that were studied were studied together. Teachers and students tried to see everything

in relation to everything else. They had to—their object was understanding through discussion. The discoverer or the experimenter, on the other hand, had to be a specialist as soon as possible; his demands gradually broke down the common training of the medieval period. Since his object was to open new fields, he did not care for the tradition of learning. Descartes, for example, began by repudiating all previous thinkers.

As the specialties multiplied, specialists could not think together. The specialties were too numerous and diverse to be studied together. The discussion that was the principal activity of the medieval university had to stop. The standard by which the medieval university determined what should be studied had to go. Anything that any specialist wanted to study had to be included. Who could say that one vocational school was any more appropriate to a university than any other? So many disciplines, semi-disciplines, and pseudo-disciplines had made their appearance by the time Mr. Whitehead proposed that an American university repeat the brilliant leadership of the University of Paris that an American university would clearly have to do so in an entirely different way from the way the University of Paris did it or would have to become unrecognizable to its faculty, graduates, and patrons.

The processes of the last eight hundred years have been favorable to the formal emancipation and education of the people. The idea that the masses should have political power has been accompanied by the notion that if they are to have political power they must be educated. But in a period of discovery, a period of specialization and esoteric experiment, what can their education be? Almost by definition nobody can know anything except a specialist, and he can know nothing outside his specialty. It must be partly for this reason that popular education in America has degenerated into a housing project. The pupil can be trained, or amused, or indoctrinated. But how can he be educated? At the same time all the wonderful things that are happening in science can be made exciting to the people, and a profit is to be garnered by writing them up in a cheerful and inaccurate way for popular consumption.

So Hermann Hesse, in his novel *Magister Ludi,* calls this the "Age of the Digest." This is the period of the fragmentary, the topical, the diverting—the period of the uncomprehended trifle. It is a period of propaganda and publicity. It is no longer assumed that the people can think. It is known that they can be pleased or put under pressure. The education that was the hope of all democrats since the earliest times has not been enough to produce a race of thinkers; it has been

just enough to produce a race of victims. It has enabled the owners of the media of mass communication and the propagandists to sell their wares. It has not enabled the purchaser to tell shoddy goods from the genuine article. And certainly it has not enabled him to engage in any intelligent conversation with his neighbors.

Universal free compulsory education has therefore failed in a much more serious sense than merely failing to produce the results expected of it. It has produced results exactly opposite to those hoped for. It has promoted the enslavement rather than the liberation of mankind.

The most remarkable paradox of our time is that, in proportion as the instruments of communication have increased in number and power, communication has steadily declined. Mutual intelligibility is probably a rarer phenomenon now than at any time in history. This state of affairs is most dramatically and dangerously illustrated by the relations between East and West. We have come to the point at which we can actually congratulate ourselves that there is a place where we can converse with the Russians, even though we do not understand them and they do not understand us. So the Lebanese delegate to the United Nations said to the Political Committee of the General Assembly two months ago, "All of us here find it hopeful that we are still able to talk freely across this table with our Soviet friends, that we are still *together,* if not in agreement. Mr. Vishinsky has done the cause of peace a real service in opening this debate, in enabling us to open our hearts to him in freedom, in sitting with us humbly and listening to and bearing perhaps with our folly." Then Dr. Malik went on: "But this is not enough: there must be a genuine communion of minds . . ."

The task of intellectual leadership in our time is to bring about a genuine communion of minds. But this is still the age of discovery. It is, therefore, still the age of the individual thinker, of the specialist. And, as a consequence, it is the age of the digest, with all the incoherence and triviality that must characterize such an age. The question is whether it is possible to retain the values of the age of discovery and regain those of the age of debate. If there is to be a new cultural epoch and not simply a further cultural collapse, the distinguishing feature of the new epoch must be this: it must combine discovery and discussion. The object must be, while retaining and encouraging the drive toward discovery, to restore the conditions of conversation.

If then we ask how the American university can repeat the brilliant leadership of the University of Paris, and if the task of that leadership is to bring about a genuine communion of minds through the restoration of the conditions of conversation, we run at once against the fact

that in the speculative realm the American university is chaotic, that in the practical realm it is silent, and that the two realms are sharply divided from each other. The chaos in the speculative realm means that ideas are unclear, unrelated, and uncomprehended. The silence in the practical realm means that on matters of life or death to our society no disinterested voice reaches the public. The division of the speculative and the practical impoverishes both. The conditions of conversation do not exist within the American university. In the academic world there is no genuine communion of minds.

One of the things Dr. Malik proposed to the Political Committee of the United Nations as a step toward communion of minds was co-operation in science, art, and scholarship. Although such co-operation should be promoted, it would not do much to establish a community within a university, or within a country, or throughout the world. A scholar in one country can now communicate with another scholar in the same field anywhere in the West. He is usually incapable of communicating with a scholar in another field on his own campus. If the university as such, the university as distinguished from its individual members, is to exert intellectual leadership toward creating a genuine communion of minds, it must first have such communion within itself.

Today a university can consider itself fortunate if its members live in the same neighborhood and have frequent social contacts; if it has an architectural plan that brings the members of the faculty into easy professional association and an academic organization that requires them all, however occasionally and superficially, to consider together the affairs of the university or any other problem outside their specialties. The importance of these items should not be underestimated; for, to take one example, the influence on speculative and practical studies of having the professional schools at a distance, frequently at a great distance, from the universities of which they are nominally a part has been uniformly bad. And those universities which have no faculty group authorized to discuss the university as a whole have not taken even the first step toward a communion of minds.

A genuine communion of minds is relatively easy to reach when the men involved view themselves as members of the same spiritual family and use a common language to impart to others the same fundamental truth. We must now try to achieve communion in a world in which there is no common language and in which men, far from viewing themselves as members of the same spiritual family,

frequently seem to think that people of certain nations and races do not even belong to the same species.

The task of bringing about communion within a modern university can be performed, if it can be performed at all, only through a common training, a common appreciation of the different kinds of knowledge and of the different methods and techniques appropriate to each, and a common, continuous discussion of those ideas which can pretend to be important, together with the consideration of the practical implications of those ideas.

Such discussion has not failed if it fails to produce agreement. An intellectual community comes into being when men can understand one another. In such a community, men, even if they disagree, should be able to relate what they are thinking to what others are thinking or have thought on the same point and on all points connected with it. The individual should be able to locate himself in a universe of discourse. Ideally, enough unity should prevail in the world of thought so that no idea, no theory, doctrine, or general view of things could exist in isolation from the rest.

A university should be an intellectual community in which specialists, discoverers, and experimenters, in addition to their obligation to their specialties, recognize an obligation to talk with and understand one another. If they can restore the conditions of conversation among themselves, they can become a university, a corporate body of thinkers, that can exert intellectual leadership and hope to make some modest efforts to fashion the mind of its time. They could hope to achieve a summation of the possibilities of thought, of the methods of analyzing, relating, and understanding ideas, with an indication of real agreements and disagreements. It may not be possible to reconcile the ideologies that now divide the world. But we cannot tell whether or not they can be reconciled until we have first tried to get them clear.

The problem, then, is to retain the values of the age of discovery, to regain those of the age of debate, and to put an end to the age of the digest. And the problem is to do this through the university as a whole, not through individuals who happen to reside in it. The condition precedent to an attack on the problem by a university is the establishment of communication among its members. We see that some universities have taken some steps in this direction. They have done what they could to minimize departmental barriers and to organize their faculties so that the subjects they must discuss transcend the special interests of any single group of specialists.

A few universities have sought to overcome the isolation of their professional schools and to unite the speculative and the practical through repressing the vocational preoccupations of professional groups. A few universities have begun to try to work out a common training, the greatest single force in the advancement of common understanding. These universities and the colleges that have worked out a common training have proved one thing, at least: they have proved that such training does not prevent or retard the production of capable specialists. A few universities have attempted to make the whole educational process a conversation. If a common course of study exposes all the students to the same ideas and techniques, and the discussion method gets them all talking about them all the time, the educational power of the institution is enormously enhanced. Those universities which are collaborating in the Great Books Foundation have joined in an ambitious effort to carry the discussion of important ideas in a common course of study to the population as a whole. The Great Books program for adults is an attempt to put an end to the age of the digest and to restore the conditions of conversation among our people.

These are hopeful beginnings. But no university has yet gone far enough to suggest that as a university it is capable of exerting intellectual leadership or fashioning the mind of the twentieth century. To do this it would have to do all the things that I have just referred to, and at the same time think as a university, and think both speculatively and practically. The intelligence of the university as such would have to be focused on great speculative and practical issues.

If now some modern sage, like Mr. Whitehead, were to ask once more how the American university might exert intellectual leadership and fashion the mind of the twentieth century, he might create for himself a sort of myth or dream of the higher learning in America. In this myth he might fancy that the university, in addition to making the most sensational discoveries in all fields of knowledge, asked itself what were the crucial problems of contemporary civilization upon which the intelligence of the university might shed some light. He might see the university studying such questions as the place of the United States in world affairs, the relations of church and state, or the responsibility of the public for the health of the community, and giving its impartial advice to a people distracted by propaganda. He might imagine that even the specialized, theoretical thought of the University would be enriched and a genuine

communion of minds advanced by this effort to focus the intellect of the university upon the continuing problems of human society.

Of course the sage would be enough of a sage to realize that the ideas that were brought to bear upon practical problems could not originate in or at least be validated by any official creed, dogma, or authority. In his dream the university would be aiming at restoring the conditions of conversation and reinterpreting basic ideas. Thus he would see the university taking up one basic idea after another and discussing, clarifying, and modifying it in the light of modern discoveries. He would see the university as a whole, the university as such, moving in both the speculative and the practical orders toward communion, unity, understanding, and the enlightenment of the world.

This is, of course, merely a myth, or a dream. But it may suggest how a university could be a beacon and how it might repeat in our day the brilliant leadership of the University of Paris.

TOWARD A NEW AGRICULTURE

René Cercler

THE IDEAS IN William Vogt's remarkable book, *The Road to Survival,* have been widely discussed, not only in America but in Europe as well. They made an especially vivid impression in France (these lines are written by a Frenchman), perhaps because our country has pursued for many years—and with some success—a repopulation policy which, applied to the entire world, would be disastrous if we had to believe the pessimistic thesis of Mr. Vogt to be well founded. What his thesis amounts to, of course, is that the food resources of the world will, in the more or less near future, become insufficient for a continually increasing population. To be frank, we in France had somewhat forgotten the threats uttered by Malthus at the beginning of the last century—threats which our peculiar demographic situation and the increasing agricultural yield had led us to consider premature.

True, at the other extreme from the somber perspective of Mr. Vogt, learned specialists reassure us with more optimistic views, declaring that there is no serious danger that the world will one day perish of hunger. They tell us not only that modern techniques allow us to foresee new increases in productivity on land already under cultivation, but also that there remain on our planet vast, unexplored territories to be put to use. Even so, the problem has been posed, and its importance is such that one cannot pass by in silence and refuse to examine it.

Moreover, the problem is perhaps badly put, or at least the recommendation which, as a conclusion, Mr. Vogt apparently wants to offer humanity—the voluntary reduction of the birth rate—may appear rather futile. In fact, granting that he may succeed in convincing a certain number of civilized people, it is difficult to see how his advice might be brought to the knowledge of the immense masses of illiterates, Chinese or Hindu for example, much less followed by them. After all, it is well known that the Asiatic populations, whose fecundity is particularly great, comprise practically a majority of the world's population. If, for fear of an inevitable world famine, the

citizens of America, France, or Switzerland agreed to the limiting of their own birth rates, little difference would result in the growth of the total world population. It is possible to solve the birth problem in this or that country, but there is no effective means of influencing the world situation. Besides, the countries which might eventually be converted to Mr. Vogt's doctrine of demographic restriction are precisely the ones which experience crises of agricultural overproduction. In this regard the example of America is typical.

The most dramatic aspect of this whole question is that on a world scale one can, at the same time, find abundance in one place and dearth in another. Without doubt, as to actual worldwide needs there certainly has never been overproduction of food; but, even granting that the potential demand can never be satisfied, the crises of local overproduction continue to arise periodically. The coexistence of misery and abundance is one of the tragic aspects of the history of nations as well as of individuals, and in fairness one must admit that in spite of generous efforts (due in particular to the initiative of the United States) no feasible method of remedying the situation has been found. The date of the inevitable catastrophe predicted by Mr. Vogt is postponed for the moment; the problem is shifted. Only when this shocking anomaly will have disappeared—if that day should ever come—only when the available agricultural resources always find buyers able to pay, only then can Mr. Vogt's fears appear in the realm of possibility though not necessarily of reality.

Under present circumstances, the discussion of this eventuality contains too many uncertain elements to render entirely conclusive the arguments of the partisans or opponents of this thesis. On both sides the antagonists will produce impressive arguments, which, however, are unverifiable.

For my part, far more interesting than the discussion of the very uncertain end of the world by famine are the causes which, so far as production is concerned, have given rise to this apocalyptic vision. Here we confront a reality from which it is not certain that all conclusions have been drawn, especially those desirable if one wishes to preserve the life of mankind. This reality is the whole problem of soil conservation and the maintenance of soil productivity. Of course, the general situation is well known. For fifty years there have been warnings of the evil effects of erosion due to the reckless tilling of lands which were once forest and prairie; and certain countries, such as the United States, have with rare courage and great vigor put into effect a policy of conservation devoted to repairing the errors of the past. But along the same line, there exist today two other

menaces to soil fertility which, to my mind, are even more serious because less apparent: the excessive use of mechanized equipment, and certain patterns of soil exploitation originating in an ideology either economic or political. As a matter of fact, mechanization is associated with these patterns, although it is not very easy to say whether it has caused them or been caused by them. It is therefore useless to discuss in themselves the advantages and disadvantages for agriculture of a generalized mechanization, since it is itself merely an element of the two so-called rational patterns of exploitation proposed for modern agriculture, namely (to employ the expressions which we use in France) capitalist and collectivist agriculture. For Frenchmen, American agriculture is typical of the capitalist pattern, whereas Soviet agriculture is the model for the collectivist. As opposed to these two forms of agriculture, modern and progressivist, we offer the old, traditional pattern of Western Europe and especially of France—peasant agriculture.

The theories of Vogt have made such a vivid impression on us because we stand at a decisive turning point in the agricultural history not only of France but of the whole of Western Europe. Seduced by the progress of technology, admiring the results obtained in production by capitalist agriculture, or perhaps beset by the propaganda surrounding the co-operative and collectivist formulas imported from Russia, we had only yesterday officially decided to abandon our ancient methods of peasant rural economy in order to launch ourselves, somewhat belatedly, upon a form of exploitation entirely new to us and inspired by foreign examples. And it is precisely at this moment that the thesis of Vogt stimulates us to reflect on and to consider the problem anew, and to demand of ourselves if really it is not we, with our reputedly obsolete methods, who have been and still are right, as opposed to the champions of modern patterns which, we have the net impression, are fatal to the permanent fertility of the soil.

To some extent, this reflection and this choice go beyond the framework of purely French or European interests and concern the entire world. For this reason I wish to call them to the attention of the American public. For if, as I think, we have the right answer in our peasant agriculture, it is our duty to bring it to the attention of the farmers of the world; and it is up to us to undertake a world crusade to convince other nations to imitate us. In that case we not only have to resist the will-o'-the-wisp propaganda to which we have been exposed for several years, but, reversing the general tendency, we also have to export our ideas and convince even those whom we were on the point of imitating only yesterday.

First of all we must define briefly what we call capitalist agriculture, collectivist agriculture, and peasant agriculture. Capitalist agriculture, to my mind, is characterized by the quest for maximum immediate profits. In capitalist agriculture one chooses the profession of farmer because it "pays," or least because one thinks so; one chooses this or that crop—wheat, corn, or cotton—because at this moment and in this situation such a crop seems to be the most profitable. Guided by this sentiment, one frequently devotes oneself exclusively to a single kind of crop, that is to say, specializes and engages in one-crop agriculture. In addition, since the particular aim is profit, it is necessary to apply to the agricultural plan the objectives of industry; i.e., reduced costs which will make the greatest possible margin of profit. The consequence is a mechanization all the more rigid, since, in the majority of countries devoted to this system, manpower is really more expensive than mechanized power. The machine, in order to be a good investment, must be used on a fairly large scale, hence a tendency toward concentration of operation.

From the viewpoint of production alone, it cannot be denied that this system has produced remarkable results. From a more general economic viewpoint, on the other hand, it has generated, in conjunction with business fluctuations, cycles of boom and depression on an increasingly large scale. True, with artificial (and costly) means, it is always possible to mitigate the worst consequences of these crises. Nevertheless, they leave behind ruins of such magnitude that one may ask oneself if their cost does not exceed the benefits previously acquired.

As for the "operator" himself, one can hardly call him a farmer; he is an "entrepreneur of agricultural enterprises," and as such he is subject to or, more exactly, he subjects himself to the laws of the market just as the industrialist whose methods he has adopted. A Frenchman who knows and admires America, Professor André Siegfried, returned from his transatlantic travels with a picture of one-crop farmers in Montana and western Canada, who buy almost all their food in stores, who often live in a town adjacent to their land, and who, when the results of their exploitation turn out to be disappointing, quit their jobs after applying for unemployment insurance. Certainly we are well aware that this is not a universal situation, but even if it is rare it is sufficient that it exists, and it offers a disconcerting spectacle for the French farmer. It makes him realize the absence of the intimate bond between man and soil in the kind of agricultural exploitation which we have described as capitalist. All this would have little importance if it were only a question of sentiment, that is, of a way of life or of civilization. But the reason

I dwell on this point is that these facts explain (or make us fear) the state of exhaustion in which the soil may be found after years and years of exploitation of this kind. If the soil is only considered as a means of immediate profit, a kind of natural machine which only requires a maximum of chemical fertilization like the oil required by an engine, then indeed all fears are justified for the future of the soil—for its future fertility and for the nourishment of generations yet unborn.

No matter how highly perfected the technique of this type of exploitation may be, I am tempted to describe it as nothing more than following the line of least resistance. One treats the soil like a mine, a mine from which one extracts the maximum up to the moment when extraction is no longer profitable. Then when the mine is exhausted, one goes prospecting for other mines. But, and this is where we agree with Vogt, will there always be new agricultural mines? The method is, after all, a sequel to that agricultural nomadism which the Americans knew well as long as there was a frontier with always new territory to exploit farther west. I do not hesitate to say that the state of mind of capitalist agriculture involves this type of nomadism. If within a given area new territories are no longer available for exploitation, one takes another job, leaving to one's successor fields that are either forever sterile or at least largely exhausted. If the successor wants to reclaim it, he has to change methods. He must no longer consider the land as a mine, but as a living being which requires recuperation in the same degree in which it expends itself. And in the second place, he must abstain from the error of applying in the agricultural sphere industrial methods the very principle of which is nonsense in agriculture. This is my judgment of what we call capitalist agriculture, despite the fact that I recognize readily its temporary merits and its dynamic character.

Collectivist agriculture, of more recent origin than capitalist agriculture, should not be confused with the community farming of past times. Collectivist agriculture is a second modern form of exploitation, which its promoters have tried to keep alive and to develop by methods which are not always those of simple persuasion. If capitalist agriculture originates in a kind of economic ideology, this method certainly proceeds from a political ideology; though in this field the distinction between economics and politics is somewhat difficult to find. Above all, collectivist agriculture is based on the socialization of the means of production, including the soil, and on the suppression of private ownership. In our context, the doctrine

interests us less than the practical results in the field of soil conservation, that is, in its potential for the nourishment of humanity. We have seen that the driving force behind capitalist agriculture is immediate profit. What characterizes collectivist agriculture is no longer the notion of profit but that of yield, more precisely of progressive yield.

At first sight one might think that this criterion is less damaging to the conservation of soil fertility. The fact alone of envisaging a progressive yield leads one to suppose that at least the initial conditions of this yield will be maintained, that the element which is its main source—the land—will be protected. The facts, however, dispel this illusion. To understand this, we must recall what has happened in the country which experimented with this program. Russia, since the revolution of October, 1917, and all the countries controlled by her since World War II have been primarily concerned with feeding the peoples under their control. Revolutions like that in the U.S.S.R. and those in the popular democracies of eastern Europe are not effected without the complete disruption of production. To remain alive becomes the most pressing concern, and it is normal that the question of yield takes precedence over all other questions—all the more so since the new regime destroys even the notions of price and profit as they appear in our individualistic concepts. Theirs is the battle of production at all costs, but within the framework of the party doctrine; although one could cite, in all those countries, curious distortions of doctrine that are tolerated temporarily with the sole aim of not interfering too violently with production.

This battle of collectivist agriculture for immediate and progressive yield bears singular resemblance to the battle for profit in capitalist agriculture, although it is based on quite different principles. In each case a maximum is sought, and in each case one hopes to obtain it in minimum time—in the first case, yield; in the second, profit. The establishment of five-year plans offers no long-term assurance for the maintenance of soil fertility, since the purpose is always a short-term acceleration of production without thought for the distant future. Finally, the methods of cultivation employed by collectivist agriculture resemble those of capitalist agriculture in the matter of mechanization and, above all, in that of one-crop policy. In fact, it employs these procedures, at least in theory, on a much vaster scale; and the concentration, which in capitalist agriculture is not inevitable, becomes an absolute rule, often attaining dimensions up to 12,000 and sometimes 50,000 acres. If the widespread use of these methods in capitalist agriculture is considered

dangerous for the soil, there is all the more reason to pronounce a similar judgment against collectivist agriculture, where the system is carried to its logical or illogical extreme.

In addition, there is in collectivist agriculture a psychological element not present in capitalist agriculture, which is unfavorable to the soil and is of decisive importance—the lack of direct interest on the part of the producer. If we have already deplored the fact that the "entrepreneur of agricultural labors"—as distinct from the peasant farmer—is devoid of attachment to his soil, which after all is his, what is one to think of the mental attitude of those exploiters of Eastern Europe who till the fields belonging to the collective? Since the notion of personal profit has been abolished under these regimes, what can be the motive of the agricultural laborer other than to exist and to escape the threat of punishment for failure to deliver the quantities demanded under the plan?

The agrarian reforms of Eastern Europe are a historical fact of considerable importance, not only from the viewpoint of civilization but from that of economics as well. Without counting the U.S.S.R., a population of ninety millions from Finland to Albania is actually on the way toward complete collectivization. Individual ownership of land is almost entirely abolished, and its last vestiges are diminishing each month; while co-operative organisms, the central part of the system, multiply. If the regime can maintain itself, and at the moment it is in the ascendancy, more than half the continent is, under the pretext of progress, ruining its resources of fertility in an attempt to increase immediate productivity.

There still survives, hemmed in on either side by these two impressive and gigantic experiences, the old peasant agriculture of Western Europe. That of France represents a sort of prototype. Its ancient traditions, its customs, its unreceptive attitude toward technological progress—particularly its slowness in the matter of mechanization—the enormous amount of work furnished by its peasants, the relatively small scale of its operations, its devotion to the multiple crop system, and its habits of home consumption, were coming by 1939 to be looked upon as reasons for shame. At least this last war had one happy result: it made men more conscious of the horizons of the world. Since the Liberation, hungering in our bodies and in our self-esteem, we in France have wanted to start out on a new basis. At this moment bad counselors have launched us on the road to socialism or worse, our agriculture along with the rest. The two great subjects of the official propaganda distributed by our agricultural leaders were general mechanization and co-operative

concentration of tillage, resulting in specialization and the one-crop system. If our peasants were hardly tempted by the objectives of pure agricultural socialism, their enthusiasm was certainly aroused for mechanization. Only the scarcity of equipment prevented more rapid increase in our number of tractors. To date we have a hundred thousand as against thirty thousand before the war, and only our financial situation limits further progress. All the same, during the last five years our spirits have changed. We have recovered our moderation. On the point of beginning an agricultural revolution, we have paused to think; and what we have perceived is precisely that our old methods, so deprecated even by ourselves, were perhaps not just extravagances but contained on the contrary a great deal of wisdom we had failed to recognize. There are in France—and in Europe, as the last General Assembly of the European Federation of Agriculture (held last October in Austria) has clearly proved—an ever increasing number of people who think that in the last analysis it is our peasant agriculture which is right as against the capitalist and collectivist systems. Vogt's thesis has only reinforced this conviction, for it suggests that only the peasant agriculture is capable of conserving the soil and hence of safeguarding mankind.

But what is peasant agriculture? We would gladly answer that it is French agriculture. Its twofold and essential character consists, first, in its attachment to the land—rather, in its passion for the land—and, second, in the notion of a farmer who lives on the land and not off the land. The first point implies stability, the second the multiple-crop system. The peasant is intimately tied to the soil, not only by the very strong feeling he has for his individual property, but above all in a very special conception of this property. It is not a concept of temporary fruition, but a hereditary one. He cultivates the fields which have been those of his parents and will be those of his children. For him the land is capital which is transmitted from generation to generation and which must not be allowed to deteriorate. He does not exploit his property in the manner of a man anxious to reap the maximum profit during his lifetime, but rather as the father of a family concerned above all with leaving to his descendants a better farm. Guided by such a preoccupation, he is by instinct a "conserver," a "maintainer" of the fertility of the land; he refuses, not just for scientific or agronomic reasons but instinctively, to apply methods which might procure for him a greater immediate income but which he senses will be likely to exhaust the soil.

He is a great agriculturist without knowing it. We did not know

it either; and it was necessary for us to observe the disastrous results obtained on other continents by only a century of nomadic or capitalist agriculture in order to understand that it was this peasant outlook which had miraculously preserved the fertility of our soil in Western Europe as well as in countries such as China. I think this comparison is sufficient to bring into relief the undeniable superiority of peasant agriculture over capitalist agriculture with regard to the fears expressed by Vogt and others. The peasant is not a speculator. He is a producer; and this will be to his credit in the history of humanity, whose survival he alone can assure. One of my French friends has found the following splendid expression of the economic role of our peasant ideas: "Inheritance is today the most modern form of technical progress in agriculture." What he means to say, condemning especially collectivist agriculture, is that our hereditary conception of agricultural production is the best formula for safeguarding the productivity of the land.

This protection is also assured by multi-culture, instinctively practiced by the peasant, who works less to make money than to enable his family to live off the produce of his own land. This last remark explains the importance of home consumption in this peasant agriculture, which does not produce especially for the market, still less for the world market. Undoubtedly this is its weakness, but for the countries interested, as well as for the peasant producers themselves, this multi-culture promotes great stability on which crises have only a minor effect. In addition to this economic advantage, multi-culture also appears to have exceptional technical merits. It presents a harmonious arrangement of both plants and animals which does not constantly drain the soil through the same cultivation of the same crops. For example, the deep layer of the soil can rest while the upper layer is being worked, and vice versa. It is a little like exercising each member of the human body in turn in order to prevent a general and total fatigue. Here, too, the multi-culture of peasant economy reveals its great wisdom in protecting the future; and for this reason it deserves without any doubt to be preferred to capitalist and, *a fortiori,* collectivist agriculture.

In conclusion, I would pose two questions. Is it necessary to convince the farmers of the world that they should, for the sake of mankind, return to—or, for those who have never known it, adopt—the agricultural patterns of the peasant? Is it necessary for those still practicing it to preserve themselves from the contamination of progressive ideas and to be satisfied with their old methods? To the first question I would answer that the total conversion of capitalist

agriculture to peasant agriculture is a vain dream for many reasons, not the least of which is the practical impossibility of changing radically and without delay (and without compulsion) the way of life of millions of individuals. But this much said, the capitalist farmers have some important lessons to learn from the peasant. The most easily assimilable seem to me to be those which concern, on the one hand, multi-culture and, on the other hand, the false notion which we have called exploitation—"mine" agriculture. It is reasonable to think that one can explain to those interested that the land is capital which one must husband. No doubt the consequences of this idea will not be immediately applied, but they will gradually gain ground and, if so, a momentous progress in world agriculture will have been made. As regards multi-culture, it ought not to be difficult, above all in a crisis, to persuade the adherents of the one-crop system of the advantages of greater stability which a change in methods of cultivation can produce. It may, on the other hand, be more difficult to make the capitalist farmers admit that there are limits to the powers of technology, especially of the machine. Conversely, and this is the answer to the second question, peasant agriculture, in order to play the role in the world for which it is ill prepared, must develop its technical sense. Its essential principles are, I think, excellent and deserve to replace those which guide other forms of agriculture. But it is necessary to admit that, though it may be perfect on a national scale, it presents serious weaknesses for an economy operating on the world scale which contemporary events have created. To free a larger surplus for the world market, this kind of agriculture must improve its structure so as to provide farms of a reasonable area, and it must overcome its backwardness in the technical field. It is in these directions that it must reform, without denying the special processes which give it power.

Thus, in the end, it seems to me that the pattern desirable for agriculture—the pattern, moreover, capable of consoling those who fear the end of the world by famine—is a kind of synthesis between peasant agriculture and capitalist agriculture. To the principles and traditions of the first, we must add the technical benefits of the second, guarding, however, against falling into its extremes. What we propose, in brief, is the adaptation of the wisdom of our forebears to the technical conditions of the modern world. It is quite possible that this might be the most desirable solution.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE PROGRESS OF WAR

2. The Triumph of Science

John U. Nef

For Europe the decade of the 1740's marked a turning point in the history of science and technology no less momentous for the future of war than military conscription and the concept of the citizen soldier. It was in this decade that Benjamin Robins, an almost forgotten Quaker scientist, provided a new technical basis for the practice of accurate gunnery by the publication of a treatise on artillery. Hitherto European scientists had showed considerable hesitation about putting their knowledge at the service of practical technological improvement, and also about confining their speculations entirely to what now alone passes as science—the study of natural phenomena which can be materially verified. It is known that Newton spent a large part of his time working seriously at what modern writers regard as "magic and superstition"; he actually left in a strongbox upwards of a million words, which have never been published, on subjects which the late Lord Keynes characterized in those terms.

In the mid-eighteenth century, a notable change occurred in the attitude of scientists; they showed less interest than their predecessors in theology and the supernatural, and they put their learning at the disposal of material improvement—increased production and more efficient destruction—with much less reserve than in the past. Nowhere was the change of attitude more striking than in France, where the desire to learn from the English in all matters of technique, from farming to manufacturing, was a result of the lead which Great Britain had gained early in the seventeenth century

over other countries in the use of coal fuel, large furnaces, and machinery driven by water- and horsepower. The publication in France in 1749 of the first three volumes of Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle* is a decisive landmark in French thought. A few years before, Voltaire wrote of his countrymen, "We are the whipped cream of Europe," and he complained that scarcely any Frenchman understood the scientific work of Newton. Half a century later, France rivaled England as a center for discoveries in the natural sciences.

Restraints of two kinds had been holding back Europeans from exploiting fully the new powers opened to them by science and technology. One was the fear of evil, the sense of the dangers which lurk in human nature and which had been stressed by Christian revelation. The other was the emphasis which European artists and craftsmen had laid on elegance and beauty of construction in all their products, at a time when industry, especially on the Continent, was still generally under the influence of artists and craftsmen. The constructive mind had been absorbed by the actual masterpiece it produced—a book, a scientific theory, a musical composition, a piece of furniture or an oil painting. What gave work its fascination was the character and appearance of the actual construction which emerged from the study, the studio, the workshop, even the shipyard and the small factory, not the practical results which might flow out of the work or even the valuables which might be bought with the money for which the constructions could be exchanged. It was not so much that men of intellectual talent were more disinterested than they have since become. It was not that they were more indifferent than their descendants to being paid. It was rather that their interests focused on what they created, and that the economic world in which they lived accepted the validity of this emphasis, instead of measuring values in terms of the practical results the products bring about, or the money they fetch. Both restraints—the restraint in the fear of evil and the restraint in the love of delight—had held back the economic exploitation of the scientific and technological knowledge which the Europeans already possessed. Those restraints had also hindered scientists from devoting themselves unreservedly to discoveries which could be turned to practical account, or even from disclosing all their scientific knowledge.

During the fifty years preceding the French Revolution, both restraints were breaking down. Nothing, perhaps, was doing more to undermine them than the diminution in the fear of evil and the fear of war. The improvement in manners, the abolition by some

princes of torture as a means of extracting legal confessions, the growing moderation of warfare, the increasing sense of the solidarity of all Western nations through the international careers of the intelligent, of artists, of the nobility, of the mercantile classes, even of military leaders like Saint-Germain; the charm of cultivated life embellished by poetry, by music both delightful and majestic, and by spacious buildings splendidly adorned; the increasing progress, which began during the relatively peaceful seventeen-twenties and thirties in the material output of goods—all these excellent things helped to persuade Europeans with the best intentions that only good could follow from the more intense and more efficient exploitation of natural resources, and from the full development of the revolutionary scientific discoveries of the previous two hundred years. Material improvement was coming to be thought of as a symptom of increasing intelligence. Increases in intelligence were coming to be considered as harbingers of good will and peace. It followed that scientists could devote their minds to material improvement with free consciences, which had been lacking when the possibilities which science offered for more wealth and longer life had first aroused the enthusiasm of Francis Bacon and Descartes. Influential eighteenth-century men, such as Gibbon, felt that the position was being reached which Descartes' younger contemporary, Pascal, had hardly hoped for this side of paradise—the position where might and justice would be on the same side, where the strongest arms would always be in the hands of the wisest, most humane men and nations.

The increasing concentration of the intellect upon material improvement, the growing interest of businessmen and consumers in the manufacture of cheaper and more uniform products, were almost certain eventually to weaken the concern of the Europeans with the elegance and beauty of the commodities they made. While there is a sense in which delight and efficiency are dependent on each other, a powerful shift in emphasis in the direction of one is almost inevitably at the expense of the other. As low costs of production and immediate practical effectiveness in the objects produced became the main object of work, and of the technical knowledge connected with it, less and less attention was given to beauty and to endurance in the products. The restraint imposed by the love of art upon the manufacture of more productive tools and more destructive weapons was beginning to disappear, along with the other restraint provided by the fear of evil.

The weakening of both restraints was partly responsible for a

striking increase of industrial output and of trade, which began in almost every European country before the middle of the eighteenth century. Eventually this economic progress was to lead to those cataracts of material goods which have characterized the industrial deluge of recent decades. What have been the interrelations between the changing outlook of the mind, the new industrial productivity and the new warfare?

During the half century preceding the French Revolution, the intellectual and economic conditions which led from wars of position to wars of movement were being prepared in Europe, above all in France. Science came to engage more minds of great talent than in the past. As religious speculations and mysteries lost some of their attraction for the intellect, scientists devoted their lives more and more to the advancement of science. At the same time an enthusiasm, which had sprung up in Great Britain during the early English "industrial revolution" of the period 1570 to 1640, for the application of scientific discoveries to agriculture, transport, mining and manufacturing, became European.

The early English industrial revolution took place during the lifetime of Cardinal Richelieu. But this was an era in France when persons who had a single-minded concern for reducing costs of production by better machinery or by the discovery and use of more ores were sometimes considered queer, if not downright mad. A hundred and thirty years later, on the eve of the Revolution, officials of the same absolute government encouraged such persons in their work, even when they were actually unbalanced.

When practical improvement carried with it much more esteem than ever before in France, older techniques for making weapons and ammunition were likely to be replaced as readily as older techniques for producing commodities for peaceful consumption. Hitherto artistic conceptions had imposed limitations upon the production of effective and abundant firearms and other weapons. Renaissance armories—for example, the large one at Nancy in Lorraine—had had artists attached to them. While the earlier producers of arms had invariably turned to artists, and while artists had insisted, at the expense of military efficiency, on decorations and embellishments for warships, cannon and small arms, a tendency that was apparently new can be detected in the late eighteenth century. Architects began to include the manufacture of arms on a large scale as a part of their visions as town planners.

The plans drawn up by a leading French architect of the *ancien régime,* Claude-Nicholas Ledoux (1736-1806), are a case in point.

His most grandiose conception was an immense ideal town. Its pu
pose was the production of salt. The curious thing is that, in additio
to saltworks and numerous auxiliary buildings, Ledoux had sketche
of an enormous cannon foundry, more than a mile long, equippe
with furnaces and mills for producing guns of bronze and iron. Th
time was approaching when an earlier procedure of the age of limite
war (which had begun in the late seventeenth century), the conversio
of cannon foundries to foundries for statues, was to be reversed
when the statues of kings were to be melted down for cannon.

One difficulty which had reduced the number of pitched battle
in the century preceding 1740, and had damped the ardor of prince
and generals for annihilating a retreating enemy army, had bee
the increasing cost of killing large numbers of men at discree
distances. This high cost was partly the result of a scarcity of wa
materials. A number of developments were needed to overcome th
handicaps which had kept warfare within bounds during the lat
seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. One was an improvemen
in the accuracy and frequency of gunfire. Another was an increas
in the mobility of artillery and of the wagons for supplying th
cannon with ammunition. In addition there had to be a notabl
increase in the output of war materials, especially of the metal re
quired for the guns and ammunition.

The intellectual movement primarily responsible for more effectiv
guns was the development of mathematical knowledge and its de
liberate application to practical military purposes. The theories o
Benjamin Robins and other mathematicians, first expounded in th
1740's, combined with the insistence of their authors that speculation
be put to the test of experiment with guns and missiles, led durin
the fifty years that followed to notable improvements in the effectiv
ness of artillery fire. A new school of mathematics developed unde
the leadership of Gaspard Monge (1746-1818), the inventor of de
scriptive geometry. This invention grew directly out of Monge
work as a military engineer. When a young man he was concerne
with determining the height of the lines of ramparts or parape
in connection with fortifications. He worked out this "defilement
of a fortress by a geometrical instead of by an arithmetical proces
Monge obtained his result so quickly that his commandant at fir
refused to receive it, but the advantages of his method of calculatio
were soon recognized. Partly as a result of Monge's influence, an
still more, of that embodied in the equally brilliant mathematic
mind of his contemporary, L. N. M. Carnot (1753-1823), the ol
Vauban system of fortifications was supplanted in French milita

practice, at the close of the eighteenth century, by a new scheme called "perpendicular." This fitted in with the quick incisive method of which the new mathematicians were masters. The leisurely conceptions of work and war characteristics of the early eighteenth century were replaced by a speed which—combined with more and more speed—led to the fast, jerky tempo of the age of industrialism, with its mechanization of work and even recreation.

In the early seventeenth century the Dutch scientist, Simon Stevin, had built forts in a way designed to facilitate the destruction, less of the enemy soldiers, than of the trenches and other material preparations which the enemy made to advance. This concept of a fort had persisted both in Holland and in France. But the principle behind perpendicular fortifications was *active* defense, involving a concentration of artillery fire which amounted to an attack upon the advancing troops. A man older than either Monge or Carnot, the Marquis de Montalembert (1714-1800), was the founder of the "perpendicular school." His masterpiece, *La Fortification perpendiculaire,* was published from 1776 to 1786 in a series of sumptuously printed volumes filled with fine plates, showing that the concern of the French military mind with art had not altogether disappeared. It was under the direction of the much younger Carnot that Montalembert's plans were adopted by the French military leaders.

A concept of total war grew up at the end of the eighteenth century. The threat of a restoration of the *ancien régime* led Monge and Carnot, both of whom were ardent supporters of the Revolution, to mobilize all the economic resources of the nation in defense of the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Monge was entrusted by the Revolutionary committee of public safety in 1793 and 1794 with drawing up a plan for defense. In his plan he embodied a new concept of a truly national military effort. He aimed to divert the entire economic life of France to war purposes. When their countries were threatened, earlier scientists had thought in terms of new weapons, which they wished to keep secret, and to use, only under extreme provocation, for the limited purpose of meeting an attack which threatened to overwhelm their country. Monge seems to have been free from such scruples, and in any event, with the growth in the scale of war it became more difficult to distinguish defense from attack, and to combine effectiveness with restraint. Under Monge's influence a number of blast furnaces were converted into cannon foundries, a number of large iron forges into boring mills. His eyes were on the religious property which many of the Revolutionary leaders proposed to confiscate. His proposals

included the melting down of churchbells to provide copper and bronze for cannon. Not content with having learned from the bell-makers of the age of cathedral building in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries how to produce guns, the Europeans now dispensed with the ancient methods of their teachers in the interest of defense and destruction. The last vestiges of their teachings were abandoned. Old cannon foundries, where a new mold was made for each gun, were replaced by efficient establishments, in which one mold was used to turn out a series of cannon of the same caliber. Monge went further. His book which appeared in 1794, in response to the assignment of the committee for public safety, *Description de l'art de fabriquer les canons,* contained proposals for converting village churches and chapels into cannon foundries.

When the armies were formed to defend the Revolution, Monge was made minister of the navy. Carnot, who was active in the armies of the Revolution from the beginning, became what we should now call chief of staff. Still later he became minister of war. Here were two great mathematicians in charge of the French armed forces. Their application of new geometrical knowledge to the actual conduct of war, together with their application of scientific knowledge generally to the problems of supplying adequate munitions, were factors of importance in the shift in Europe from wars of position to wars of movement. It was only a step from their concept of defense to wholesale offensive warfare.

On the eve of the French Revolution, speculations and experiments of other scientists and technical experts besides Robins, Monge and Carnot, were helping to reduce the weight of artillery pieces and to improve the gun carriages. Cannon were rendered more mobile. With the relatively peaceful conditions which prevailed in eighteenth-century Europe until after 1792, and with the increase in industrial output, new commercial pressure arose for improved facilities of transport, such as would make it possible to move heavy commodities economically for longer distances, and to concentrate industrial enterprises about indispensable natural resources, especially coal and ore. Notable improvements were made, not only in Great Britain but also on the Continent, in the systems of roads with bridges. Better carpets were provided by the improved roads for rolling artillery and wagons carrying ammunition. As production increased, more munitions, more guns of every description were forthcoming. The output of iron in France grew some four- or five-fold between 1720 and 1785. France was producing more metal on the eve of the Revolution than any other country, probably more

than had been produced at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the whole of Western Europe, if not in the entire world.

Europe was discarding the intellectual and moral inhibitions exemplified by John Napier, the Scottish discoverer of logarithms and a great predecessor of Monge and Carnot in mathematics, who is said to have refused on his deathbed in 1617 to disclose the nature of the weapons he had invented—which included a tank, a submarine and some kind of explosive alleged to destroy life on a surface of several miles' circumference. With the new confidence in the material destiny and moral perfectibility of man, scientists felt less compunction than their predecessors to conceal any device which their knowledge and genius enabled them to prepare. Instead of worrying about the consequences of bequeathing to their fellows and descendants more powerful destructive instruments, some of them, like Monge and Carnot, rolled up their sleeves in the central offices of military administration. They were putting abstract knowledge at the service of the practical directly, without intermediaries. They were able to direct the disposition of the more numerous cannon, to extend the new methods of using the guns, to plan the general course to be taken by the soldiers and sailors who did the marching, the sailing, the loading and the shooting. It is significant that the science which Monge and Carnot mainly applied to practical problems of destruction was the most abstract of all. According to a later French savant, C. A. Laisant (1841-1920), who also had a military and political career, what distinguishes mathematics from the other sciences is that it borrows from actual experience, from the external world, a *minimum* of notions.

When pure speculation in the realm of mathematics could be harnessed for practical objectives, there was no science which was likely to stand aside either from the war office or the market place. In the late eighteenth century the gap separating speculative thought from its practical application was being rapidly closed, not only in France but also in England, where industrial expansion was almost as rapid as in France before 1785, and much more rapid afterwards. Other European countries were moving in this matter along with these two leading states.

After 1792 war gave the minds of an age which had a special admiration for the intellect more widespread exercise than had been provided by the earlier, less complicated and comprehensive military operations of previous civilized peoples. The possibility of winning battles by calculations in the relative calm of desks, and by the relatively safe movements of trains of munitions, was making warfare

no more strenuous and hardly more dangerous for many persons than the ordinary occupations of peaceful daily life. For the persons exercising administrative authority or giving expert advice, war occupations were becoming more exciting and rather more interesting than peace occupations. War was coming to resemble a game of chess, calling for much ingenuity, in which the pawns were real men. As time went on, as the numbers of men, guns and horses engaged in war multiplied, as the distances increased at which killing could be effective, it became more and more difficult for the men in offices to distinguish actual from toy soldiers.

The extension of an enthusiasm for military exploits to the mass of the population, accompanied by material progress of many kinds and by the progress of administrative skill, made it feasible to mobilize and utilize a nation's man power on a large scale for purposes of general conquest, to realize in war the new concept of the citizen soldier. It was possible to combine the increased firing power of artillery with a concentration of fire worked out by the perpendicular school of fortifications. Such a combination produced under Napoleon a new tactical principle. On the battlefield fire was concentrated upon a definite point in the ranks of the enemy, until this was ripe for inroads of the infantry. By advancing with fixed bayonets, a weapon of which the French infantry became the acknowledged masters, they demoralized large units of soldiers, as the attacking French demoralized the Russians and Austrians at Austerlitz. Simultaneously, the cavalry, massed in far greater numbers than in the past, would bear down at high speed and in overwhelming force upon an enemy wing in order to overwhelm a crucial element in the defense. With the new resources in metal, and the greater ease with which cannon were moved, such operations could, if necessary, be repeated several times in the course of a battle, until the defending army was put to rout. Increase in the speed of movement also led to a renewal of the pursuit of a defeated enemy, a practice which had been largely abandoned after the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Greater fighting power was obtained in another way. During the late seventeenth century the growth of larger armies had been accompanied by the organization of an extensive transport service, which hauled food and other supplies for the soldiers on campaign. A stock of food for eighteen days was required. Each soldier carried bread to last three days; the bread wagons of each company had a further six days' supply; the flour wagons of the commissary, flour for a further nine days. In addition transport was provided for

hundreds of tents and for much superfluous baggage belonging to the officers. Then, at the end of the eighteenth century, the methods of supply were changed once more. In spite of the further increase in the size of armies, the soldiers were again made to live largely off the supplies provided by the country they invaded or passed through, as soldiers had done during the religious wars. The revival of this practice was facilitated by the planting of potatoes all over Europe, toward the end of the eighteenth century. Potatoes had played no part in the Seven Years' War. Twenty years later the War of the Bavarian Succession was jestingly named the "potato war," so many of the soldiers lived on the new vegetable which they claimed as they moved along.

The change in methods of supplying the armies made it possible to muster greater energy for battle. There was no longer a need for the generals, planning their campaigns, to consider constantly how to move and provide for long horse-drawn trains of baggage and indispensable supplies, trailing in the rear of the moving forces. As the soldiers took lodging where they found it, the practice of carrying tents was abandoned. Horses for provisioning could be dispensed with, and this increased the number available for the cavalry and artillery. It became possible with an army of approximately a hundred thousand men to provide an additional five thousand cavalry or several hundred extra guns. The change was attended by a marked increase in casualties and in the decisiveness of battles.

Science, especially mathematics, was also working to increase the power of attack in naval war. In the mid-seventeenth century, especially in France, artists, rather than mathematicians or mechanical-minded architects, still had a promient part in the designs for warships. A French painter named Puget stood out with considerable success in 1670 against instructions given by Colbert for a reduction of the ornaments in naval constructions. Puget was in charge of the designs for warships in the naval arsenal at Toulon. With the approval of a still more celebrated French painter, Charles LeBrun, he managed to retain sculptured prows and to continue to embellish the sterns of his ships with decorative galleries. A delight to the lover of art, these embellishments produced what a modern engineer calls an "absurd stern, with costly ornamentation."

In the late eighteenth century these concessions to the inefficiency of the artist were overcome by a new interest in material results. Ships of war began to be made into what a lover of beauty, writing in 1873, compared to the most barren kind of barracks. In Puget's time the English and the Dutch had been far ahead of the French

in suppressing ornaments and other decorations. But soon after 1750 the French, for whom English technical methods had now a fascination, concentrated their skill on better-armed, more effective fighting vessels. A succession of able technicians both in France and England led inquiry concerning the building of warships into "practical channels." As a careful naval historian, F. L. Robertson, has explained, they proved "by actual trial . . . that much of the accepted theory was faulty." Robins' experiments with guns for use on land were repeated in connection with the guns on men-of-war. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the new knowledge and the new concern with practical efficiency brought a change in the character of sea fighting. Typical older battles of the period of limited warfare—Beachy Head in 1690, Malaga in 1704 and Toulon in 1744—were battles of slow attrition and meager results. By concentrating ships and fire on a section of the enemy line of ships, much as the artillery concentrated on land upon a particular point in the opposing ranks, Rodney, Duncan and Nelson, the famous English admirals of the Napoleonic period, when England commanded an immense superiority in ships over the French emperor, were able to modify naval tactics, to break up the enemy's fleet, and to win more decisive victories at sea, such as had hardly been sought since the Elizabethan age.

After 1792, particularly between 1804 and 1815, huge armies, set in motion especially by Napoleon, swarmed over Europe to fight in huge masses, thousands of miles from home. The armies thrown into engagements were now four or five times the size of the largest during the religious wars. Out of fashion during the age of limited warfare, battles were being resumed in which "you are either victor or vanquished." Only a few hundred men had died in 1792 at Valmy, that "decisive battle," as it is classed in military history, which opened twenty-four years of battles. Before the Revolutionary and the Napoleonic wars were over, the dead had to be counted in millions.

When the massacre was drawing to a close in 1813, the Comte de Saint-Simon, horrified by what had taken place, addressed some questions to the mathematicians, which read a little strangely from the pen of a man who was later to put much hope in engineering as a solvent for the difficulties of modern civilization. "What right have you," he asked the algebraists and the arithmeticians, "to occupy the post in the vanguard of science? . . . All Europe is cutting its throat, what are you doing to stop this butchery? Nothing. What

am I saying? It is you who perfect the means of destruction; you who direct their use in all the armies."

With the breakdown of restraints upon the use of knowledge for practical purposes, scientific thought was put more directly at the disposal of economic development of every kind. It is difficult to estimate the share of military "improvements" from 1740 to 1815 in setting problems whose solution contributed to the remarkable industrial advances of the age. War is one of the activities in which the European peoples have engaged, like other peoples before them. With the development of the experimental sciences, which have interested the Western peoples as they interested no previous civilized societies, all practical activities, among which the production of weapons and other munitions is one, presented more abundant material than ever before for scientific investigations. The more the peoples of the West devoted their energies to war, the more problems of military preparation provided subjects for scientific investigations.

What distinguishes war from other practical sources of scientific and technical inspiration is its double-edged character. War is by far the most dangerous source of knowledge and of intellectual speculation. The more the peoples of the world devote themselves to efficient military preparations, the more frightful and complete are likely to be the wars which ensue, the more they are likely to interfere with speculative and artistic life and with all serious culture, whether among the few or the many. The speculative and artistic cultured life of Europe, fruits of a Christian society, provided the foundation on which the industrial civilization of the twentieth century was reared. It is upon the intelligent and charitable use of that faith and culture that the future of civilization depends.

The success of the British in applying scientific knowledge to practical economic development from 1785 to 1815 was less the result of pressure to meet military and naval requirements than of the freedom of Great Britain from the fighting. The intellectual forces that helped to produce the frightful continental wars worked in England and Scotland mainly for economic progress. Just as Great Britain laid the foundation for the modern industrialized state partly through its isolation from the major fighting of the religious wars, so partly through its isolation from the major fighting of the Napoleonic wars the island gained a lead over all the other nations in what was to become a race for industrial supremacy. Again England got many of the constructive economic benefits of warfare without most of the disadvantages. In order to defend Great

Britain, it was sufficient to maintain a strong navy, and to raise without conscription relatively small expeditionary forces to strengthen the allies on the Continent who were resisting Napoleon. The demand for arms and other war materials which England could provide added to the much larger demand for necessities, comforts and conveniences from a peaceful and expanding British population, with growing markets overseas. These demands combined to stimulate the development and the mechanization of more and larger British mines and factories, and to encourage the canal cutting and road building which had started before 1789, and which made it cheaper to move coal and iron, the basic military and industrial materials of the nineteenth century. Opportunities to sell guns to the warring nations on the Continent, and especially to the allies who were fighting Napoleon, were not neglected. In 1805 or 1806 a German traveler, Philipp Nemnich, visited the best-equipped iron-works in Great Britain, the large Carron works in Scotland. There he found that, in good years, about five thousand cannon were cast, many for export to Russia and Germany. These cannon were bored with machines driven by water power. The vast Carron works were a realization of a grandiose idea, which Ledoux had embodied in his plan for a salt manufactory. It is difficult for civilized peoples to increase the facilities for producing peaceful commodities without also increasing the facilities for destroying property and killing men.

Peaceful conditions within the island of Great Britain were more important than war abroad in stimulating industrial production. At home people lived almost as tranquilly as in the novels Jane Austen was writing. Under her delicate guidance the reader never meets with any mention of the terrible wars. Partly because of the improvement in manners that had taken place in western Europe since the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the British lived much more securely than in that earlier age of extraordinary prosperity and peace, which had lasted through the lives of Shakespeare and Donne. The sensational newspaper had still to put in an appearance. There were still no vehicles of communication to whip up fear and anger among the people. The Enlightenment made for bigger wars. But scientific and technical progress was insufficient to make total war possible.

Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago

PICASSO: LA FAMILLE DES SALTIMBANQUES

PICASSO AND RILKE

"La Famille des Saltimbanques"

Peter H. von Blanckenhagen

RILKE'S *Duino Elegies* are, we may say without hesitation, the most important German contribution to twentieth-century poetry.[1] These intricate poems, unique in purpose and form, so filled with allusions and suggestions, with new uses of familiar language, have been the subject of repeated interpretation in French and English as well as in German. They are, however, by no means exhausted; their full meaning is not yet understood and remains a challenge to the future. One of the purposes of this article is to make a contribution to this understanding.

It is well known that the "Fifth Elegy" was inspired by a work of visual art, Picasso's painting, "La Famille des Saltimbanques," now in the Chester Dale collection on loan to the Art Institute of Chicago. This relation to another work of art is not exceptional in Rilke's poetry, but here the case is different because of the quality of both works. The "Elegy" belongs among the most important poems Rilke ever wrote, and the painting is one of the most important Picasso ever produced. His "Acrobats" is not only the main work of the artist's so-called Rose Period, it is also one of his most beautiful works, perhaps one of the best pictures of the twentieth century. So close a connection between a masterpiece of painting and a masterpiece of poetry is singular indeed and therefore calls for a special and thorough comparative analysis.

This problem is even more complicated than might be expected, for the painting is not the only external source of the poem. Rilke once described in a letter a troupe of acrobats whom he knew when he lived in Paris. We shall, therefore, proceed in the following way: starting with the analysis of the picture, we then turn to the letter and finally attempt an interpretation of the "Elegy" itself.

[1] All quotations from the *Elegies* are taken from Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies:* The German text, with an English translation, introduction, and commentary by J. B. Leishman and Stephen Spender (New York, W. W. Norton & Co., 1939), with permission.

If it is true that artistic and poetic creations tell us more about the spirit of an epoch than does anything else, then we have, in the analysis of these two related works of art, an opportunity to gain a somewhat better comprehension of our century. And that is the other aim of the following considerations.

To start with a simple but significant point, the picture, painted in 1905, is very large; its size is no less than eighty-four inches by ninety and three-eighths inches. This in itself is most unusual. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, pictures have become much smaller; the taste for the monumental has almost vanished and has become somewhat suspect. If we meet large paintings, they usually are not great or not monumental. Neither the big Cezannes nor the huge representation of the Seine beach by Seurat could be called monumental in the proper sense of the word. But Picasso's painting does possess precisely this quality; the simple grandeur of the composition shows that most clearly. In the language of art history it is called a "group" picture. Oddly enough, even this apparently conventional subject matter is not at all frequent in modern painting. Impressionistic groups are either *genre* or landscapes with *staffage*. In group compositions, Toulouse-Lautrec or Degas uses figures only as parts of a special atmosphere and as representatives of certain actions; and in most Impressionistic paintings human figures fade away in a mist of lights and colors, hardly more important than trees or tables, flowers or fruit. Later painters, if at all interested in groups, dissolve the human figure into mere expressions executed in dismembered forms and colors. But in Picasso's work we see a simple, almost classical group of distinct persons existing without activity in a setting which is no landscape. A monumental group of human figures—this is given and this only, perhaps for the first time since the end of the classical period of European painting.

The group represents a family of acrobats, but this is not at all new. By the early twentieth century, circuses, acrobats, clowns, and dancers had become favorite themes of French painting; but here, again for the first time, the familiar motif is entirely changed. These acrobats are not supposed to create the peculiar atmosphere of theater or arena like those of Toulouse-Lautrec. They do not perform; they are. Their profession is represented only by the garments they wear; nothing points to the stage or to their regular performances. The persons themselves are combined with one another

not so much as a circus troupe as members of a family. "La Famille des Saltimbanques" is the title of the picture. The archetype of a human community, the union of parents and children, is the subject matter of the painting. But the family are in fact acrobats; the question has to be raised at once, Why such a family? We shall try to answer this question through a simple description of the composition.

The initial analysis shows that the six persons represented are divided into three compositional parts, a group of three figures on the left, two in the center, and one on the right. This is a most unusual arrangement which precludes any sort of simple balance. Balance, however, certainly exists and is achieved by an astonishingly bold variation of the compositional weight of the three parts. The preponderance of the group on the left is reduced by representing two figures from the back and combining all three very closely with one another. The two boys in the center are presented frontally and in distinct contours. The single woman on the right, however, is completely separated from the others; she is the only one who sits, and she is pushed forward into the right corner of the picture, almost falling not only out of the group but out of the frame. Her position makes her even more significant and impressive than the solid group of three persons on the left; whereas the middle group, farther away and consisting only of two children, gets its importance through its position in the exact center of the painting.

We see that a clear and strong balance, yet a hidden and spiritualized one, characterizes the composition. This balance, moreover, is by no means static, but is thoroughly dynamic. A clearly directed and energetic curve leads the eye of the observer from figure to figure. It begins with the girl, goes over to the man on the left, turns and leads to the fat man who represents a certain stop; but then it continues toward the boy with the drum, turns again to the small brother beside him, and finds its aim in the woman on the right. This direction is perfectly clear; it is impossible to follow it the other way around, and the curve can only be understood three-dimensionally. It begins slightly remote from the observer, leads even farther away, and finally runs forward. Like a bull-whip, it swings around first comparatively slowly, only to gain momentum and finally rush ahead. Such is the energy of the curve that it actually seems to leave the picture proper: we imagine it continuing beyond the composition somewhere in our direction, not straight at us but passing by diagonally and leaving us behind. The direction and acceleration of this curve are reinforced by the gazes of the two

boys and the woman. Their eyes look the same way: they look somewhere beyond the picture, beyond even the observer—somewhere behind him. This seems to be of the utmost importance, since it is through these gazes that the picture gets its peculiar quality of simultaneous remoteness and immediacy, withdrawal and penetration.

The concealed yet well-constructed balance, utterly original and genuine and not to be compared with any classical composition, and the dynamic impact of the curve which combines the figures and relates them to each other and to our own world—these give the work its unique power. Its activity, which could hardly be greater, is entirely spiritual, undisturbed by any outward visible movement. Five persons stand and one sits, all completely motionless.

The sort of stance they take, however, deserves special consideration. The girl, the man and the two boys place their feet in the same way. (An attentive observer will note that, oddly enough, the old man has only one leg. His right one is left out, certainly because its red tights would have damaged the clear outline of the girl's left leg.) The position is somewhat artificial. It is the starting pose of acrobats, struck immediately before they begin their performance, but we have seen that nothing in the picture indicates any such performance. On the contrary, it is the attitude of quiet which is stressed in all the figures. The pose apparently has become so habitual for the acrobats that they assume it unconsciously. Normally—and this is important—the stillness of this pose foretells movement, but here it will not be followed by any motion. Thus the peculiar stance is senseless, only emphasizing the complete quietness and at the same time changing it into a touching symbol of meaninglessness.

Of this we find much more in the painting. There are first the gestures. Only two figures touch one another. The girl's left hand is taken by the right hand of the man next to her, but this grasp is unfeeling and incidental. The girl turns her head away and the man does not look at her. His left hand is resting on his back; empty and useless; and so are the hands of the small boy, hanging down, hardly touching the end of his shawl. But most significant is the gesture of the woman. One hand lies in her lap, half-opened like the hand of a beggar; the other one touches her shoulder and hair in a forlorn way, as if touching something unknown which does not belong to the same body. This very indicative gesture is repeated exactly by the boy in the center. Also, how do the boy, the fat man and the girl carry their different objects? There is nothing of human energy or even will, nothing which combines these things with the

persons; they resemble the frozen figures of a dream rather than living human beings.

Even more significant than all that is the peculiar gaze. The closely connected group on the left is not combined through glances, rather they avoid looking at one another. The two boys do look toward their mother, but she is not the goal of their glance; she is almost an obstacle to this glance, which goes much farther. Its direction, however, is the same as that of the mother's. We see now that it is precisely this direction of the eyes of three persons which establishes, stresses and accelerates the thrust of the compositional curve. It is through this gaze that the picture, in spite of its aloofness, is so strongly related to something behind us, so much so that we are almost impelled to turn around and follow this gaze. But if we did so, we would look at that emptiness upon which these figures have fixed their eyes. Moreover, these eyes are dark shadows only, without pupils, without shape or cast. It seems important to realize that the power of their expression is accentuated by the empty distance between the boys and their mother.

The observation of this empty space leads us to the description of the "landscape" in which the figures are placed. It is, in fact, not a landscape at all, but a vast, empty area without shape and without boundaries: a desert. The extremely high horizon line stresses a formless and unarticulated terrain which is infinite, unhuman, sunless, and shadowless. Only a close investigation of the original painting reveals how masterfully Picasso has painted this desert, how he has managed to paint really *the* desert. The color seems to be a reddish-yellow, but actually the whole scale of colors used in the entire picture is to be found again in the monochrome of the desert. The color of the desert indeed repeats and mirrors those of the figures completely, thus evoking the figures themselves once more and combining them with their surroundings. The similarity of the colors in figures and landscape sometimes goes so far that the body of the boy in the center for instance would be completely absorbed by the desert if it were not for his distinctly outlined contours; and indeed this almost happens to the woman. Her skirt is only faintly outlined; its colors change from dark orange to dusty gray-yellow and thus actually merge into the color of the soil. Her legs are covered by the desert-colored skirt; it remains unclear what she really sits upon. Thus it appears as if she grew up from the soil itself like a plant, much more closely connected with the earth than the other figures. Here we may realize the coincidence of compositional and expressional significance. Had the contours of the skirt been

distinctly drawn, the figure really would fall away from the group and out of the border of the frame, destroying the balance and unity as well as the meaning of the composition. This astonishing position in the foremost corner is necessary in both aspects, and it has been made possible through a very simple and hardly recognizable detail.

The more we examine the picture, the more the woman comes to be its most important part, its spiritual center. This center is as far removed as possible from the mathematical center of the canvas. Thus we have to analyze this figure more thoroughly. The color of the garments combines orange and blue, the two basic colors of the whole picture. The face has almost no color at all, as is true of all the other figures. The faces are painted in the dusty grayish yellow which characterizes the desert. But only the woman wears a hat, a curious straw hat apparently, ornamented with cheap flowers and not really placed upon her head but somehow suspended and hovering above it. Hardly distinguishable, this hat, like the skirt, merges into the desert, which thereby absorbs the head of the woman, though not actually touching it. The outline of the face, essential as it is, had to be distinct, and yet the head was to be merged with the desert as completely as the body. All this does not explain the peculiar quality of pathos and frustration which the hat, in its attempt at decoration, gives to the whole figure. The presumably artificial flowers which decorate it correspond to the flower basket of the girl. Both are cheap and dusty, sorrowful relics of a no longer flowering, barren earth where lonely, lost, and isolated men are exposed to an unknown fate somewhere outside themselves.

Loneliness, helplessness, and meaninglessness were the terms we arrived at through an analysis of the figures themselves; they are the same words we must use in describing their surroundings; they are, in fact, the proper words to characterize the whole picture.

There was a time—and the forerunners of Picasso have pictured it—when such common activity as acrobats engage in could establish and mirror a genuine personal union, and thus possibly symbolize the union of the family. Their performances in a way represented the happiness of a well-balanced and genuine co-operation. A family of acrobats indeed may symbolize in a broken and isolated world the last possible human community where each needs and believes in the help and understanding of the others. But there is always present an element of artificiality, a sheer virtuosity, which contradicts the sense of family as the foundation of society. It is in fact a contradiction to social life as such, an exception and a singular case. Perhaps there is a reason why artists seem to have been tempted so

often by acrobats and to have liked so much to join them and to represent their life. The number of acrobat paintings in Picasso's work, for instance, is enormous. Professionally, acrobats are separated, isolated and alone; and if they form a family, then this family represents the lost human community much more clearly than any other, the dissolution of which could, in a sense, be only incidental. Indeed, two years earlier, in 1903, Picasso painted such a family of average citizens, the "Dejeuners sur l'Herbes de la Famille Soler" in Liege. Here two parents and several children are separated and look, not at each other, but straight forward at the observer. This picture has to be understood as a sort of forerunner of the "Saltimbanques." Impelled by the requirements of their profession, these persons are together; they have to remain with one another, unable to search for another possible connection and therefore more definitely isolated and lost in the desert of the world, loveless and meaningless fragments of scattered mankind.

In June, 1915, looking for an appropriate place to spend the summer, Rilke asked Frau Hertha Koenig, the former owner of Picasso's picture, for permission to use her apartment in Munich during her absence. He wrote that he did not have any special requirements:

> . . . at most I would on some afternoon sit for a long time before the Picasso, which gives me courage for this request, just as does the certainty that in your good rooms I would perhaps in an instant find that working mood which I have not known for months. I could also go to work in the Picasso room, near the balcony; that would be indescribably glorious . . .

And he ends this letter with the sentence, "I might sign myself 'Guardian of the Picasso.' " Shortly after, he wrote to a friend: ". . . sitting here in the apartment of friends with the finest Picasso [the "Saltimbanques"], in which there is so much Paris that, for moments, I forget." And before he left Frau Koenig's, he referred for a third time to the picture: "As the owner is returning from the country tomorrow, I must leave these rooms and with them the glorious big Picasso beside which I have been living now for almost four months."

These three references demonstrate clearly enough the great importance Picasso's work must have had for Rilke, but what he really says about it seems quite strange. He expects the picture to be of some help to him in his work; he calls it the finest *(schönste)* Picasso, in which he finds "so much Paris" that he can "forget,"

that is, forget the war. If we did not know to which painting Rilke referred, we would certainly think of one of the gay and serene Impressionist paintings rather than of the "Family of Acrobats." How could that picture "encourage" rather than depress anyone, how could one find "Paris" in it?

It was in Paris, however, that Rilke once observed a group of acrobats. He described it in a letter written in 1907:[2]

I have just been in the Luxembourg. Before it, in the direction of the Panthéon, Père Rollin and his family were spread out again. The same rug lies there; the same cast-off coats, thick winter coats, are piled on a chair where just enough space remains for the little boy with his serious large face, the grandson of the old one, to sit down a little—just enough room so that one might say he sits at all—between turns. And that is all, exactly as it was a year ago. But Père Rollin, who used to swing the heavy weights, no longer works and says nothing. He has been retired to the drums. Movingly patient he stands there in his strength which can no longer be used though still a little too big for drumming. So he drums much too often. Then his son-in-law whistles to him, and he stops frightened and apologizes with a shrug of his heavy shoulders, and punctiliously he shifts his weight to the other foot. But in the next moment he has to be whistled at again, the old man drums once more. He hardly knows it. He could drum perpetually—you must not think he could become tired.

But it is not his son-in-law who does the chief work now. To be sure he works well, there is nothing to say against his work, and he likes it, too, as it ought to be. But the one who controls everything—and how she does—that's his daughter, of course it is she, blood will tell. The weights have been sold, they are no longer fashionable, and the children move with the times. But they have invented spectacular things; the old man takes pleasure in them. And how she speaks, his daughter, so quick-witted and firm, almost like himself, like old Père Rollin whom nobody equaled in wit or in work. In the audience there were some who knew him: 'Hey, Father Rollin—' but he only nods casually. The drumming is a big affair and he takes it seriously.

This shows clearly that Rilke was quite familiar with this particular family of acrobats, that he knew them for at least two years and probably longer, and that the group as such, not only its performances, impressed and moved him. The members of the family expressly mentioned are: the old father who has now retired, the

[2] First published by B. J. Morse in the *Welsh Review*, III (1944), 128; and then by D. Basserman in *Der Späte Rilke* (Munich, Leibniz Verlag, 1947), p. 415, apparently without knowledge of its previous appearance. This letter is based upon an unpublished passage from Rilke's notebook, dated July 14, 1907, a copy of which was kindly sent me by Dr. Ernst Zinn, one of the editors of Rilke's complete works. Comparison shows that the letter is considerably shorter but varies only slightly. No other persons appear, the description of everyone is broader but not essentially different. In both descriptions Père Rollin is the chief person. The letter is copied from the notebook in almost every sentence. The one deviation which really matters for our purposes is concerned with the description of the small boy.

small boy exhausted by the work, the son-in-law, and the daughter who became the actual manager of the family. This, curiously enough, is a combination very similar to that which Picasso represented. It seems certain that Picasso's picture reminded Rilke of that real group, but on the other hand it is obvious that this cannot be the only explanation for the extraordinary significance it had for Rilke. The description Rilke gave in his letter is of an impression which has hardly anything in common with the spirit of the picture. Genuinely Rilkian as it is, it is not basically different from what any sensitive observer of Parisian life might have felt in a similar way. But we know that Rilke's authentic and peculiar Paris was not and never has been the Paris of the average visitor. Obviously it was this Paris, his own Paris, which Rilke recognized in Picasso's picture. He might have felt in it an expression of the sentiments which had haunted him, he might have seen in Picasso an artist close to the poet he was—a sympathetic human being in a world which did not understand him and which he did not understand. For this reason he expected inspiration from the picture; it enabled him to "forget" the obstacles in his inward and outward world. It was possible for this to happen through the accidental resemblance between the pictorial representation of a group of acrobats and that real group which he had once seen and described. The latter now got a new and far-reaching importance because of what he recognized in the painting. Here we realize a process not at all unusual in the human mind, the encounter with an artistic creation that comes to have unique significance because it reproduces, vivifies, deepens, and changes the recollection of something real and concrete. The original experience had, on the other hand, prepared the mind for the reception and the understanding of the work of art.

This occurrence produced, seven years later, the fifth of the *Duino Elegies,* the one dedicated to the former owner of Picasso's picture and about which Rilke wrote to a friend, immediately after having finished it:

> But now, imagine, in a radiant afterstorm *(Nachsturm)* another elegy has been added, that of the "Saltimbanques" . . . And so then, there exist also the "Saltimbanques" which so definitely concerned me even since the very first time in Paris and which have haunted me ever since.

In beginning the interpretation of the "Elegy" we have to keep in mind that a real understanding may be reached—if at all—only within the content of the whole work. Here, of course, it is impossible to delve into the problems of the Rilkian concepts of the Angel, of

Love, of Death, of Transitoriness, to mention only some of the most obvious difficulties; but in many aspects the "Fifth Elegy" differs from all the others. Here alone are concrete and continuous actions described, forming the backbone of the entire poem, and only here is a definite and real scene given. But both are transposed from immediate reality into that new reality which the poem itself creates. Perhaps the most difficult part of a legitimate interpretation is the re-creation of this specific reality in its own pattern.

The poem opens with a question:

> But tell me, who *are* they, these acrobats, even a little
> more fleeting than we ourselves,—so urgently, ever since childhood,
> wrung by an (oh, for the sake of whom?)
> never-contented will?

"More fleeting than we": Man as a fleeting, insecure being is one of the main topics of the *Elegies*. So we read in the "First Elegy": "We don't feel very securely at home within our interpreted world." Even in our strongest sentiment, in love, we only *seem* to be stable, lasting, enduring—"for we, when we feel, evaporate; oh, we breathe ourselves out and away. . . . Like dew from the morning grass exhales from us that which is ours . . ." In this aspect the acrobats are symbols of man who has no stability and is driven by a "never-contented will," the purpose of which is unknown and even undiscoverable. Rilke continues by describing this somewhat abstract will to action which impels the acrobats:

> That keeps on wringing them,
> bending them, slinging them, swinging them,
> throwing them and catching them back: as though from an oily
> smoother air, they come down on the threadbare
> carpet, thinned by their everlasting
> upspringing, this carpet forlornly
> lost in the cosmos.
> Laid on there like a plaster, as though the suburban
> sky had injured the earth.

The carpet "forlornly lost in the cosmos" is a distant echo of that carpet Rilke once saw and mentioned in the acrobat letter. Here, however, it evokes an atmosphere which is similar to that of Picasso's picture. For the first time we notice a peculiar blend of both the sources which inspired the poet. The following lines:

> And hardly there,
> upright, shown there: the great initial
> letter of Thereness *(des Dastehns grosser Anfangsbuchstab)* . . .

have been already related to Picasso's picture, but, oddly enough, the verse has not been related to the peculiar pose struck by the acrobats in the painting.[3] We have already discussed the typically acrobatic position of the feet of Picasso's figures and its peculiar meaning. It is significant that Rilke recalled just this very characteristic and yet not immediately obvious detail into a passage which is almost an interpretation as well as an entirely new and genuine symbol for the poet himself.

The "initial letter of Thereness," however, is but a passing moment. The acrobatic work begins again:

> . . . than even the strongest
> men are rolled once more, in sport, by the ever-
> returning grasp, as once by Augustus the Strong
> a tin platter at table.

Now the description turns to the audience, comparing it to a flower which slowly fades and drops its petals:

> Alas, and round this
> centre the rose of onlooking
> blooms and unblossoms. Round this
> pestle, this pistil, caught by its own
> dust-pollen, and fertilized over again
> to a sham-fruit of boredom, their own
> never-realized boredom, gleaming with thinnest
> lightly sham-smiling surface.

Like the manifold unity of a rose consisting of a center and the surrounding petals, acrobats and audience essentially form a unity too, but the rose fades and loses its petals, and only the center remains. Audience and acrobats, world and mankind fall apart; the audience vanishes, the acrobats remain alone.

At this point begins the description of the members of the group. A much more immediate connection with both letter and picture is to be found in this part of the poem:

> There, the withered wrinkled lifter,
> old now and only drumming,
> shrivelled up in his mighty skin as though it had once contained
> two men, and one were already
> lying in the churchyard, and he had outlasted the other,
> deaf and sometimes a little
> strange in his widowed skin.

[3] Rilke, *op. cit.*, p. 103. Another interpretation is given by B. J. Morse in his previously noted article.

Clearly, that "old retired drummer" the letter mentioned finds his resurrection here, but thoroughly transposed. At the same time, these lines may very well be related to Picasso's fat man in red tights in whom Rilke could recognize something of Père Rollin. The notebook described Rollin even more extensively. It mentioned his face which had become too large ("withered, wrinkled"); it is as if the features hang down raggedly without inner tension, as the notebook observes.

In the next acrobat mentioned, we have to recognize the "son-in-law" of the letter. In the first draft, which fortunately is preserved,[4] Rilke wrote "son-in-law" and changed this only later into "the youngster, the man." On the other hand, this acrobat could as easily be related to the man on the left in the picture.

> And the youngster, the man, like the son of a neck
> and a nun: so tautly and smartly filled
> with muscle and simpleness.

Here the description stops for a moment and the poet addresses directly the next two acrobats, combining them but separating them from the preceding ones. Their description forms the middle part of the "Elegy," no less than thirty-seven lines being concerned with these two acrobats. They are, very significantly, children. What childhood meant to Rilke his work reveals time and again: "Who'll show a child just as it is? Who'll place it within its constellation, with the measure of distance in its hand?" This passage we find in the "Fourth Elegy" which, incidentally, was written in the fall of 1915, shortly after Rilke had left the apartment with the "glorious Picasso." Similar passages on children and childhood can be found throughout his entire work. The way in which, here, the acrobat children are addressed is very strange indeed:

> O you,
> a pain that was still quite small
> received as a plaything once in one of its
> long convalescences. . . .

We probably have to interpret this passage as follows: These children do not have toys; they themselves are toys, they are objects, they have been given to a "pain" that was "still quite small." They still are in the hands of that early pain which has by now grown up; they are

[4] H. Jaeger, *Dichtung und Volkstum*, XL (1939), 213.

in its possession though able to serve as consolation like a toy in the hand of a suffering child. How can they do it, how do these toys, these "playthings" behave?

First the poem turns to the boy:

> You, that fall with the thud
> only fruits know, unripe,
> daily a hundred times from the tree
> of mutually built up motion (the tree that, swifter than water,
> has spring and summer and autumn in so many minutes),
> fall and rebound on the grave:
> sometimes, in half-pauses, a tenderness tries
> to steal out over your face to your seldomly
> tender mother, but scatters over your body,
> whose surface quickly absorbs the timidly rippling,
> hardly attempted look . . . And again
> that man is clapping his hands for the downward spring, and before
> a single pain has got within range of your ever-
> galloping heart, comes the tingling
> in the soles of your feet, ahead of the spring that it springs from,
> chasing into your eyes a few physical tears.
> And, spite of all, blindly,
> your smile. . . .
>
> Angel! Oh, take it, pluck it, that small-flowered herb of healing!
> Shape a vase to preserve it. Set it among those joys
> not *yet* open to us: in a graceful urn
> praise it, with florally soaring inscription:
> "Subrisio Saltat.".

The opening metaphor, the child understood as a "plaything of a pain," is abandoned, and the lines simply describe the performance of an acrobat boy. But in the demand that the Angel should take his smile, this brave hopeless smile, the poet seems to refer to that toy of the pain "in one of its long convalescences." For this smile has a power of healing, is in fact a healing herb which must be preserved in a "graceful urn," inscribed "Subrisio Saltat."[5] The smile is that medicine we do not as yet have in the world (the word "yet" is emphasized in the original text by italics). It belongs to the "joys" of another world. Here for the first time a slight indication of death is

[5] The correct interpretation of this phrase has been found by Dr. Zinn, who has published a proof-sheet note of the poet: "As if it were the inscription on a chemist's jug, abbreviation of Subrisio Saltatorum" (Acrobat's Smile). In the first draft Rilke wrote *"Sorris. Saltimb."* and *"Pulv. Risus Saltimb.,"* thus more clearly indicating the abbreviated Latin found on apothecary labels.

given, the theme of the finale, the Angel and Death, is touched.

And now follows the other child, the girl:

> Then you, my darling,
> mutely elided
> by all the most exquisite joys. Perhaps
> your frills are happy on your behalf,—
> or over your tight young breasts
> the green metallic silk
> feels itself endlessly spoilt and in need of nothing.
> You,
> time after time, upon all of the quivering scale-pans of balance
> freshly laid fruit of serenity,
> publicly shown among shoulders.

The image of a child as a "freshly laid fruit" is another instance of Rilke's idea of these children as objects rather than as persons. With these lines the account of single acrobats ends, having taken up forty-nine lines of the 108 in the entire poem. The poet turns again to the group as a unit, but what follows transcends the preceding description. Therefore it is chiefly this part of the "Elegy" which has been related either to the picture or to the letter. We have seen that the recollection of the real group obviously contributed more directly to the description of the "drummer" and the "youngster" than did the picture. But the lines related to the boy and the girl are of a greater significance in the poem. The letter, however, concentrated the description on the three adults. Primarily, it stressed the old drummer, second in rank was the woman and third, her husband. No girl was mentioned at all and the boy was only slightly touched. In this context, however, the deviation of the notebook from the letter is quite important, for the notebook is much more concerned with the boy. Here Rilke pointed out that the boy needed the rests between turns, being still a beginner whose feet pained him every time he struck the ground. His large face could hold a lot of tears, but nonetheless they sometimes filled brimful his wide eyes. That did not grieve him, however; he would not have noticed it if it had, since it was simply a pain and not he himself that cried. Time would make that come easier and eventually the pain would vanish altogether.

Clearly, the "Elegy" took up what the letter left out, what was obviously being explicated by the phrases "downward spring," the "tingling of the soles" and the "few physical tears." We can only guess why Rilke did not pay much attention to the boy in the letter, which was after all written the same day but most certainly after

the notebook passages. Did the boy seem to him of less importance, to be described in the notebook only for the sake of completeness? Why did he think of him so concretely when writing the "Elegy"? It may very well be that the boy acquired his new significance through Rilke's encounter with Picasso's picture, which served to vivify this particular part of his recollection. In particular this group of two, where both figures express about the same feeling, must have reinforced Rilke's impression of the single boy in Père Rollin's troupe.

The significance of the two boys in the composition as well as in the content is, as we have seen, very great. Moreover, the appearance in the "Elegy" of the girl closely connected with the boy finds its main source in Picasso's work.[6] How much may be seen in two details: "Your frills," "or over your tight young breasts the green metallic silk." Both are a distinct echo of the *soutien-gorge* Picasso's girl wears, even in the slight effect of "metallic green" which only a very close observer of the original painting will discover. It may also be noted that the first draft shows that the whole concept of the girl has been developed out of these frills.[7] Is not the Rilkian formulation, "mutely elided by all the most exquisite joys," a thoroughly legitimate interpretation of the attitude of Picasso's girl, her flower-basket, her bowed head, her hand lost in that of the man? Here again the original inspirations have undergone a definite change; they are completely transformed and transposed.

Even more subtle transpositions of the painting are to be seen in the lines dedicated to the boy in spite of the above-mentioned relations to the notebook. "Sometimes . . . a tenderness tries to steal out over your face to your seldomly tender mother . . . the timidly rippling, hardly attempted look . . ." It is no longer necessary to analyze the similarity between these lines and the painting. Another detail, however, may be pointed out: it is the "graceful urn" which is supposed to preserve the "healing herb" of the "boy's smile." Hardly visible in the painting, a small jug appears between the boys and the woman. Very rightly, the urn of the poem has already been related to this jug. In the picture, the jug to a degree combines the boys with the mother. In the "Elegy," the description of the boy points for the first time to the end-theme, "joys not yet opened to us,"

[6] Morse, *loc. cit.*: True, Rilke's friend to whom the letter was written, Mme. Dora Heidrich, "distinctly remembered" such a girl in the troupe she and Rilke saw performing in Paris in 1906—that is, a year before Rilke described the group in notebook and letter. But what really matters is that he did not mention the girl in either place. Apparently she had not particularly impressed him until his memory was reinforced by Picasso's picture.

[7] Jaeger, *loc. cit.*

and these joys are the acrobat's smile. No such smile, no such joy, could possibly be found in the picture. Thus on this point picture and poem seem to have nothing in common. Yet I think that a connection does exist, although a concealed and unlikely one. This can be demonstrated only after answering another question, namely, whether or not the woman of the picture, the most significant figure of the composition as we have explained, appears in the "Elegy." She is, to be sure, touched in the description of the boy: "your seldomly tender mother" (who, by the way, can hardly be traced to the "quickwitted" daughter of Père Rollin), and that might be sufficient. If Picasso's figure had left no stronger mark on the poem than this, we would have to conclude that in writing the "Elegy" Rilke had drawn from the picture no more than certain atmospheric details and a general stimulation, and that the chief material came from that real troupe he now recalled.[8] But if nothing else, only the dedication of the poem to Frau Koenig should make those opinions doubtful. In fact, it seems to me that the picture has contributed more and in a more decisive way. We shall attempt to prove this while interpreting the remaining lines.

So far the poet has dealt with his acrobats ready and able to perform or even in the act of performing. It is hard and cruel work and essentially it is in vain. What then is behind this performance and what exercises preceded it; where did the training take place and what sort of training was it? What happened when at last the continuous stream of endeavor flowed into the final success of the mastered performance?

> Where, oh where is that place,—I carry it in my heart—,[9]
> where they still were far from being *able,* still fell away
> from each other like mounting animals, not yet
> properly paired;—
> where weights are still heavy,
> and hoops still stagger
> away from their vainly
> twirling sticks? . . . . .
>
> And then, in this wearisome nowhere, all of a sudden,
> the ineffable spot where the pure too-little
> incomprehensibly changes,—springs round
> into that empty too-much?
> Where the many-digited sum
> solves into zero?

[8] As a matter of fact, this is the opinion of Mr. Morse in his article, as well as of Mr. Basserman.

[9] "*Wo, O wo ist der Ort,—ich trag ihn im Herzen—.*" The Leishman-Spender translation of this line, "Where, oh, where in the world is that place in my heart," seems to be needlessly inexact and changes the meaning.

For an understanding of this passage we first have to remember the opening sentence of the "Elegy": ". . . these acrobats, even a little more fleeting than we ourselves . . . wrung by an (oh, for the sake of whom?) never-contented will."

The poet experienced in himself ("I carry it in my heart") that vain endeavor which tries to master life by man's own will and training. The countless exercises, however, ("wrung by a never-contented will") matter more than the moment of final success. For this is an "ineffable spot" where a "pure too-little . . ." "springs round into that *empty* too-much." That can mean only that it is not given to us to succeed in the realm of reality. Our lives are characterized by a continuous incapacity which makes us "fall away from each other"; and even if "all of a sudden" we should eventually reach the moment of success it will not be through a real capacity in us, it will only be an apparent success in a "wearisome nowhere." Our "changes" are "incomprehensible," are an "empty too-much," not a true existence at all, whose "many-digited sum" is, as such, insoluble to us. If we believe that we have solved this task we are wrong and therefore the solution is "zero." Here ("nowhere") human life would end and change into Nothing, into a meaningless death. The better the "many-digited sum" seems to be solved, the cheaper, the less meaningful will death be.

Now the "Elegy" turns to the image of this Death:

> Squares, O square in Paris, infinite show-place,
> where the modiste Madame Lamort
> winds and binds the restless ways of the world,
> those endless ribbons, to ever-new
> creations of bow, frill, flower, cockade and fruit,
> all falsely coloured, to deck
> the cheap winter-hats of Fate.

Death seen as a Parisian modiste who decorates the cheap human fates with falsely-colored ornaments—that indeed is a shocking, almost preposterous metaphor. It is the same death which Rilke described time and again in his novel, *Malte Laurids Brigge,* the modern, assembly-line, mass-produced death "Malte" observed in his Parisian Notes (the modiste Madame Lamort—the modest Madame La Mort).

The words "winds and binds" certainly are an intentional reference to the beginning of the "Fifth Elegy."[10] "That keeps on wringing them, bending them, slinging them, swinging them, throwing them, and catching them back"—"that" is the "never-contented will"—"for the sake of whom?" Now we are answered: for the sake of a

[10] The first draft even reads "swings" *(schwingt)* instead of "winds" *(schlingt).*

meaningless Death who "winds and binds" human lives to produce endlessly nothing but the "falsely coloured" decorations of the cheap "winter-hats of Fate."

What can have evoked this strange image of "Madame Lamort"? I think we are permitted to raise this question and I also think we can answer it. It must have been Picasso's figure of the woman. Rilke's "Madame Lamort" is Picasso's "Madame La Mère," who also sits in an "infinite show-place" with her touchingly cheap, flowered hat, really a "hat of Fate." The outline of the hat is the only detail in the picture which is ambiguous to a realistic observation. It is represented in a way that surpasses Realism and foreshadows Cubism. The "winter-hats of Fate" have another source as well.[11] In the letter Rilke described the "cast-off coats, thick winter coats, . . . piled on a chair, where just enough space remains that . . . the little boy . . . may sit down." The cast-off winter coats of the letter and the cheaply decorated hat of Picasso's figure are blended into the "cheap winter-hats of Fate" of the "Elegy."

This detail reveals very much. By breaking down a single rather odd line into the original raw material out of which it was created we may begin to be aware of what reality means to a creative mind, how a creative mind handles reality, what, in short, happens—unconsciously to be sure—when a creative mind produces. It is always the detail which teaches us most, it is always a single but concrete peculiarity, small though it be, which eventually may lead us to a conception of the whole. In the picture the woman represents the spiritual center of the composition, detached from the group and "eccentric." Her significance could not possibly have escaped Rilke. The guise in which she returns in the "Elegy," her transformation into Madame Lamort, shows perhaps more clearly than anything else how deeply Rilke had understood and realized the message of Picasso's picture.

We have now for a moment to turn back to the "urn" preserving the "not yet open joy" of the boy's smile. The jug in the picture is placed between the smaller boy and the mother; in the poem the urn points to Death, thus combining it with the boy. But the relationship is even more complex: in the latter there is beside the winter coats "just enough space" for the boy with his "serious face." What we have here is, therefore, precisely the same double relation to letter

[11] In the first draft we read: "The cheap hats of Fate," beneath which is the word "springtime" *(Frühlings)*, and below that as an alternative and in parentheses, "Winter." The first image, that of a "springtime hat," follows the picture closely; the final formulation, "winter-hats," points to the real troupe.

and painting as we found in the "winter coats." It is, however, the picture and not the letter or the notebook which evoked the image of Death as a whole.

It is the Angel who is asked to take the urn with the herb of healing; it is he who may honor it with the inscription "acrobat's smile." And now at the very end, separating it from the preceding parts by a distinct paragraph, the poet addresses the Angel once more. Through this repeated address we are now prepared for the "joys not yet open to us" which Madame Lamort could not furnish. Is human fate mercilessly condemned to that "show-place" where the "sum" must "solve into zero"? Is it not possible to imagine another place where the endeavor of acrobats is not in vain, where they are *easily* able to perform, where the audience does not "unblossom" but participates in a genuine community? The poet addresses the Angel, that being who "surpassing us," as Rilke once wrote, "vouches for the recognition of a higher reality," and he asks the Angel to "suppose" that there is such a place.

> Angel: suppose there's a place we know nothing about, and there,
> on some indescribable carpet, lovers showed all that here
> they're for ever unable to manage—their daring
> lofty figures of heart-flight,
> their towers of pleasure, their ladders,
> long since, where ground never was, just quiveringly
> propped by each other,—suppose they could manage it there,
> before the spectators ringed round, the countless unmurmuring dead:
> would not the dead then fling their last, their for ever reserved,
> ever-concealed, unknown to us, ever-valid
> coins of happiness down before the at last
> truthfully smiling pair on the quietened
> carpet?

The ending, to be sure, offers no consolation ("Angel: *suppose*"); it is a question only. But at last it seems conceivable to raise this question, to imagine another sort of Death who has followed upon another sort of Life. The "countless unmurmuring dead" possess the "ever-valid coins of happiness," the sum of their life did not "solve into zero." And these coins "for ever reserved" like the acrobat's smile, and "unknown to us" ("not *yet* open") are flung "before the at last truthfully smiling pair (that is, no longer "gleaming with thinnest lightly sham-smiling surface") on the quietened carpet," which is no longer that "carpet forlornly lost in the cosmos." There, and only there, the acrobats will be able to display all that they were always unable to manage *"here."* Acrobats? The word does not appear; instead it reads "lovers," and this may well be the key word. The

acrobats "still were far from being able, still fell away from each other like mounting animals, not yet properly paired"; here *lovers* show "their daring lofty figures of heart-flight, their towers of pleasure," here they are able to manage their "turn."

Love, the most difficult lesson we have to learn, the greatest task we have to try to fulfill, is, as Rilke wrote in the "First Elegy," the "oldest sufferings of ours," which ought "to be yielding more fruit by now." Rilke's entire work circles around this concept of love; time and again he "sings the great lovers," the "forsaken ones you found so far beyond the requited in loving." Lovers "are taken back by the exhausted Nature into herself"; thinking of them it "rustles towards you now from those youthfully-dead," those dead without whom we "that have need of such mighty secrets" could not exist. Love, to be sure, in its final and genuine form never can be achieved, at least not here and not yet. But our task is to attempt it. Then Life and Death will be the same. "In the Elegies," Rilke wrote, "affirmation of life and affirmation of death reveal themselves as one. To concede the one without the other is, as is here (in the Elegies) experienced and celebrated, a restriction that finally excludes all infinity. Death is our reverted, our unilluminated side of life: we must try to achieve the greatest possible consciousness of our existence, which is at home in both of these unlimited provinces, which is inexhaustibly nourished out of both . . . The true form of life extends through both regions, the blood of the mightiest circulation pulses through both: there is neither a Here nor a Beyond, but only the great unity, in which the 'Angels,' those beings that surpass us, are at home."

We have tried to interpret the meaning of both Picasso's and Rilke's works. It is now essential to emphasize that an analysis of the "Elegy" by uncovering only the "influences," the "stimulations," or even the allusions to picture, letter and notebook, could never lead us to a real recognition of either its formal or its "spiritual" existence. For this purpose all those "sources" might very well be left alone. For a great work of art transposes and transcends the material it first uses and then absorbs, and creates another different world of its own. Both picture and poem are autonomous. But on the other hand is it not precisely this of which we have to be aware in dealing with artistic creations? And how can we become aware of this fact if not by and after such an analysis?

The comparison, however, has shown us more. It has demonstrated a very similar concept of life revealed in both works. We now under

stand the symbol of acrobats within this concept which is, significantly enough, a symbol frequently used in modern art and literature. But we will hardly find many other great works of contemporary art which express so penetratingly the despair and loneliness of modern man exposed to nothingness. Picasso ends here; the unsentimental melancholy of his picture has no rapport with anything—that space toward which his figures gaze, that space behind us, is empty. Rilke envisages the possibility of a question: "Angel: suppose, there *is* a place, we know nothing about . . ." This place cannot be "here" nor can it be "beyond." Where, then, is it? Where, then, shall we find that "great unity of both regions"? With this question, everyone is alone and art gives no answer.

RECENT FRENCH LITERATURE

A REPORT

Wallace Fowlie

In France the personality of the writer counts for a great deal. Slightly more glory and veneration are attached to a writer in France, particularly an older writer, whose name often ends by becoming a symbol, a synonym of some literary school or doctrine. The oldest living writers, *les aînés,* as they are courteously called, represent France and the ideas of the nation. They are spoken of as often and even more often than the middle-aged and younger writers.

The somewhat mysterious word *présence* is used often in literary criticism in France, especially if the author under discussion has recently died. It is a delicate and difficult task to discover and then to analyze the "presence" of a writer among other men. It seems to begin when, to a work which is known and public, is added the creator of the work. The author becomes identified by his work, elected by it when his name becomes more than a name, when it grows into a voice that is audible. The writer is a "presence" when his voice reaches to the deepest and most permanent part of his reader.

France today has two very old and celebrated writers, aged eighty and eighty-one, who are referred to as pivotal figures in any literary discussion or evaluation. These men, Gide and Claudel, were once good friends but have grown apart through the years because of their strikingly different temperaments. Gide has become better known in America recently, since winning the Nobel Prize and since the publication of the excellent translation of his *Journal* by Justin O'Brien. In France he is, with Claudel, the greatest literary figure and enjoys a tremendous prestige. His prestige is no longer that of influence, as it was fifteen or twenty years ago when his ideas, the so-called Gidian morality, had a very marked effect on the young. But he continues to live in Paris as a kind of demigod. Each time he appears in public at a café or a restaurant or a theater, it is reported and commented on as if any action of his now must have some particular significance

Every public demonstration tries to include him. At a recent assembly held in honor of the first world citizen, Garry Davis, and presided over by such men as Camus and Breton, Gide was unable to be present because of bad health, but a communication from him was read. Already a large number, a library in itself, of books and articles on Gide have appeared. He is a classic in the sense that he has been codified and tabulated and studied as a historical figure. Courses on him are given in American universities, but not yet in France, because he is not dead. This year, Mme. Davet, Gide's secretary at the moment, published a book on one of his earliest books, *Les Nourritures Terrestres,* which is the history of the criticism of the book, the history of all the quarrels and opinions the book has engendered. Gide's popularity had somewhat diminished just before and during the war. But now he seems to be read more than ever, and especially by the young generation reading him for the first time. But he is read more for his art and the totality of his achievement than for his ideas.

The great sign of distinction for living writers is to appear in the Pléiade edition, a leather-bound, carefully edited and chosen series of major literary works. Gide's *Journal,* in 1939, was the first volume of a living author to appear in the series. This last year two volumes of Claudel appeared, containing his entire dramatic writings. The theatrical event of last year's season was the "Générale" of *Partage de Midi,* on December 16, at Jean-Louis Barrault's Théâtre Marigny. Paul Claudel was born in 1868, and the play was written almost fifty years ago. Because of the central theme of the play, announced in its title, one felt the intensity of the full noon sun still over the career and destiny of Claudel. The evening at the Marigny was an homage to him as well as to his work.

Claudel has stressed the importance of this play in his career. It belongs to that kind of writing whose origin lies in the existence itself of the poet. The play was, in fact, so intimately related to Claudel's personal life that for a long time scruples, which now he considers somewhat exaggerated, prevented him from publishing the text. The subject matter of the play is almost trivial, but Claudel has raised it to the magnitude of a battle between the Law and Grace in its most diverse and unexpected forms. The woman Ysé, in the three men grouped around her, pursues a stability, almost a security, which the world is unable to provide and which she will find only in death.

Early in 1949, another play of Claudel, *Le Pain Dur,* was put on in a very different kind of theater, the Atelier in Montmartre. This is a

more simple, more conventionally constructed play that has none the lyric tumult and mysticism of his other plays. It will probal be the play preferred by the non-enthusiasts of Claudel. It is the le lyric, least Christian, and most theatrical of his works. It has alm a Balzac affinity: a mixture of the burlesque and the tragic, an e transformation of the commonplace.

This year Claudel is represented in Paris by three plays in prod tion (the third is a revival of *Le Soulier de Satin* at the Coméd Française) and by a new publication on the Song of Songs: *P Claudel interroge le Cantique des Cantiques.* The book at first wo seem to be a commentary on Scripture. The eight chapters correspo to the eight chapters of the Bible text. The method of the comment is precisely what the title of the book indicates: Claudel questi the text and constantly refers to himself. He reads the text with all memories. "That reminds me of," he is always saying. He makes pretense at dialectics. The book is a kind of personal journal, k between 1943 and 1947, by an old man who still has a great deal to

The equally celebrated contemporary of Gide and Claudel, P Valéry, died in 1945, and seems today to be less read. A great autho France, as soon as he dies, becomes the possible subject matter learned books and doctoral dissertations. Valéry is undergoing a k of eclipse because he has suddenly ceased being a living writer an being approached cautiously by the scholars who will vie with another in writing the definitive work on him. This will have to put off for some time, however. Valéry left 400 variously sized n books of writings that have not been published. They, of cou belong to Mme. Valéry, who has just had four copies on micro made of each page of the 400 notebooks, which she is giving to f libraries in the four corners of the world. One has already b deposited in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and one in Wide Library at Harvard. But the stipulation is that these notebooks be kept under lock and key for fifty years. Despite that discourag fact for Valéry scholars, there are already several thesis subjects Valéry reserved at the Sorbonne.

This spring the first thesis (thèse d'état) was presented at Sorbonne on Valéry, three and a half years after his death. The examination, or *soutenance de thèse,* of M. Bémol, a teache German at Clermont-Ferrand, was written up in all the pa in Paris. Bémol had been preparing his thesis for 28 years; tha he must have been waiting for Valéry's death in order to present thesis, confident that he would outlive his subject. He presente complementary thesis of 150 pages on *La Méthode Critique de Va*

as well as the main thesis of four hundred pages, entitled *Paul Valéry*. The five judges harried and tormented him between 1:30 and 7:30. They reproached him for not quoting from this article and that article, for not granting enough position to Goethe as one of Valéry's masters, for overindulging in such epithets as "admirable" and "incomparable." At one point, when M. Bémol weakly apologized for writing on so recent a subject, Mme. Durry, one of the judges, reminded him that Valéry himself had once said: "Everything ends in the Sorbonne" *(tout finit en Sorbonne)*.

Of the next generation of writers, two who have already died are conquering a steadily increasing public, and especially a young public. They are the only prose writers who are being read fervently and who have any chance of turning out to be spiritual leaders for the young generation. The first to die, or rather in this case to disappear, was Antoine de St.-Exupéry, the air pilot–writer, who never returned from a flight on July 31, 1944. His posthumous work, *Citadelle,* was published in 1948, from a manuscript of almost one thousand pages. He has become for France a kind of poet of action, whose grave and lucid books were widely read before and during the war. He is looked upon more and more as a spiritual writer who has described in his work the essential stages which unite the individual with God: the family, the house, the trade, the community. One of his most often quoted sentences is: "L'homme veut donner un sens à son coup de pioche." He consistently disavowed any system which would take material comfort as the one goal of man's efforts.

The man himself remains mysterious and enigmatical despite the fact that his friends have begun to write about him. His legend of heroism and mystery is still pretty much intact. He is the poet of aviation, an archangel suspended between heaven and earth. The text of the posthumous work, *Citadelle,* is not much more than a series of notes and improvisations. The publication has been premature and, probably because no one yet knows how to read the work, it has disappointed and puzzled. Many of St. Exupéry's essential themes are in it, however: his belief in the virtue of the heart, in intuition, in sentiment, in greatness *(la grandeur),* which one day will cause him to be compared to Corneille. Things and beings in themselves are nothing, according to his belief. What does count is the bond that unites them.

Georges Bernanos died last year and was at that time acclaimed by the astute and learned critic, André Rousseaux, as the sole con-

temporary writer upholding the Catholic tradition in French letters. It is true that his novels and essays are being read and commented on more than those of other writers who seem to belong to this tradition. There is actually in France today no great spiritual leader among its writers. This is an extraordinary lack in French culture of the moment. Bernanos was a man of prodigious vitality, whose character is marked by contrasting traits: violence and tenderness, gaiety and vituperation. Those who approached him saw in him the man of his books. He is remembered especially for his passages of invective and strong polemics. He has often been called the pamphleteer of modern France, the successor of Léon Bloy. His work constitutes a major testimonial of our time. From now on, I imagine, his work will gradually reveal its essential meaning, which is doubtless of a prophetic order. His books are warnings—especially on the loss of modern man's liberty—of many kinds: political, economic and humanistic. The extremely dramatic character he confers on belief in Christ will alienate the nonbeliever as it has done for the work of Léon Bloy.

Bernanos is perhaps today the supreme example of a literary "presence" in French literature. He recalls and even reincarnates one aspect of French civilization: the baptistry of Reims and the adventure of the crusaders. Nothing in his work can really be understood unless it is seen from a Christian perspective, as engaging a real man behind a fictional character, and behind him a nation, and behind it the entire world.

Among the living writers of this generation of Bernanos and St.-Exupéry, the one who, for twenty years, has been representing the Catholic tradition has of recent years lost his high position of influence. I doubt very much if the younger generation in France reads François Mauriac. The fame he knew in the thirties in France, however, exists today in England, where his entire works are being translated. Mauriac has given to French literature the most complete and stark picture of provincial pharisaism that exists. He wrote, as early as 1926, *La Province est pharisienne,* and continued to study this theme in each of his successive books. In 1939, J.-P. Sartre published, in *La Nouvelle Française* for February, an analysis of Mauriac, which, more than anything else, I would guess, has diminished Mauriac's position in French letters and discouraged the younger readers from continuing with him. It is in this essay, included in *Situations I,* that Sartre tries to prove that Mauriac leaves no liberty to his characters. The end of the article has been quoted so often that it has become a cliché: *Dieu n'est pas un artiste; M. Mauriac non plus.* After two

successful plays, *Asmodée* of 1937 and *Les Mal Aimés* of 1943, his third was an out-and-out failure: *Passage du Malin,* first played in December, 1947. Mauriac is a far more personal writer and more limited than the two who have replaced him today, Sartre and Camus. He still remains a distinguished figure for the readers of *Le Figaro,* and one day he will unquestionably occupy an important place in the history of the French novel. He has written only about his own personal torment, and that is precisely what Sartre has never revealed.

The career of André Malraux has undergone a more curious and more complicated development than Mauriac's. Before the war his position was solidly established as one of the leading novelists, whose large social frescoes of *La Condition Humaine* and *L'Espoir* had revealed a world torn by the worst catastrophies. During the war and immediately afterwards, his prestige declined, more in France perhaps than in America. His political alliance with De Gaulle might explain this to some degree. But then in 1948 appeared his two volume work, *Psychologie de l'Art,* which is, without much doubt, one of the most important books of our time.[1] It is far more than art criticism or art history. Malraux is the most recent man of letters in France who has undertaken to write on art. The lineage is a noble one: Diderot, Stendhal, Baudelaire, Taine, Alain, Valéry. The book has recaptured for Malraux a place of high esteem in the younger generation. They are reading it as a hymn of love to universal art.

Malraux believes that a struggle or battle is at the origin of artistic creation. A young artist will first imitate a master and then react against him and create an individual style. This theory of the struggle for beauty, whereby a revolt lies at the beginning of each new art, is a familiar theory; but Malraux turns the history of art into a dramatic story that has something the character of the *Iliad* or a *Chanson de geste.* He is particularly fond of the revolutionaries: Goya, Manet, and the Christian sculptors. He has a tendency to feel and therefore to stress the pathetic and the catastrophic in art. Malraux exalts those painters who depicted the lowest examples of humanity (Frans Hals, for example) . He exalts those painters who efface their subject. Malraux dilates on the theme that the princes and the bourgeois who are painted disappear from the face of the earth and only the painter remains. He is in total agreement with Valéry when he writes: "Un peintre n'est pas d'abord un homme qui aime les figures et les paysages, c'est d'abord un homme quie aime les tableaux." The long work on the psychology of art, written in an opulent, almost Bossuet-

[1] An excellent English translation by Stuart Gilbert was published by Pantheon Books in 1949 under the titles, *Museum without Walls* and *The Creative Act.*

like style, is exacting and stimulating. It touches on many problems of literature, as, for example, the emotion of the spectators watching *Oedipus*. To participate in a work of art is comparable to plunging into a conflagration. There is something almost satanic in Malraux's belief that art reveals to us a secret way of possessing the world. He sees the artist as one who creates another universe, who corrects or reorganizes the work of Genesis.

Malraux makes his subject into one of startling beauty and seduction. His book is really on the subject of human genius. Because of its tone and fervor, Malraux is already being considered a kind of spiritual guide in France. In his first volume, he elaborates the theory that art is always following one of two beliefs. The first is that whereby man is seen as mastering the world, as dominating the mystery of the world. In this art, Greek and Renaissance, the human figure is triumphant. The second is the belief that the mystery of the world is greater than man and crushes him. Here he would live in accordance with some terror for all that is sacred. The second volume deals with that kind of art that seems to contain both beliefs, such as Western medieval art. In this art, as in the "Smiling Angel" of Reims or "Le Beau Dieu" of Amiens, Malraux studies the relationship between man and the sacred—and particularly those forms of art which represent a harmony between them. This final book recapitulates many ideas of Malraux, such as his belief that the genius is inseparable from that out of which he is born, as fire is inseparable from what it burns.

I suspect that many worthy young poets are not being published in France. The great vogue for Aragon's poetry is fortunately over. Henri Michaux is one of the most stable in esteem and productiveness. His little hero, Plume, has become a contemporary character, a French, and therefore sophisticated version of Sad Sack. The older poets who are the most read today and whose influence is everywhere visible are Apollinaire and Rimbaud. The director of the Mercure de France who keeps in print the *Oeuvres Complètes* of Rimbaud, a handsome and inexpensive edition, prefaced by Claudel, told me that for years now the book has sold fifty copies each day of the year. I dare say that these figures indicate that Rimbaud is the best selling poet in the world today. Books and theses about him continue to appear. No poet is so able as Rimbaud to sustain so many opposing theories and interpretations. Interest in Mallarmé has never been greater than at this moment. The *Vie de Mallarmé* by Mondor

(1941–42) and the Pléiade edition of his works (1944) have incited endless studies. Most of the serious critics are granting that he is the most perfect of the French poets, and the time will soon come when he will be called one of the very greatest. At one time few readers would tackle Mallarmé, but now his poetry, more familiar, suddenly appears more accessible and comprehensible. The fragments of letters published by Mondor have provoked admiration, and when they are published one day in their entirety they will unquestionably make Mallarmé into one of the leading letter-writers of France.

The critical studies on poetry of the last few years are probably more important than the new poetry. They form additional chapters in the long work of exploration on the meaning of poetry which has been going on in France for a hundred years. The heart of the examination has to do with the relationship of the poet's work with the world's mystery, with that which the French call *le sacré*. In our own contemporary climate of catastrophe, the poets are claiming and calling attention to their powers of foreboding, of presentiment, of prophecy. André Breton, still leader of the more or less disbanded surrealists, states that at least one of his sentences predicted the atomic bomb. The general atmosphere of the poetic movement at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth had an eminently prophetic character. People had jeered at the ivory tower and they were wrong. The themes of the end of man and his fall *(la fin* and *la chute)* were fairly constant in the poems of that time. Endless examples could be drawn from Rimbaud's *Saison en Enfer:* "J'ai appelé les bourreaux pour, en périssant, mordre la crosse de leurs fusils." The catastrophe we fear today was predicted as far back as Poe in his Colloquy between Monos and Una. The subject of blood and warfare is treated in romanticism and symbolism as well as dadaism.

Antonin Artaud, who has been resurrected and promoted by the *avant-garde* group in Paris today, prophesied in 1933, "La veille des catastrophes qui nous menacent." It is not difficult to see a relationship between Rimbaud's phrase, "voici le temps des assassins," and the universe of cruelty of the recent concentration camps. Alfred Jarry, favorite of the surrealists, whose complete works were published for the first time in 1948, described the tortures of the concentration world long before they were a fact. There is no end of examples. In 1864, Victor Hugo wrote to Nadar, "L'homme devient projectile." In 1931, Valéry wrote, "L'Europe aspire visiblement à être gouvernée par une commission américaine."

The poets of today have behind them two or three generations of

remarkable poets and are somewhat crushed by the greatness of their immediate ancestors. But their belief about poetry is close to the magical conception of art, as elaborated first by German romanticism and then by Nerval, Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé. Its major ambition is to restore to words a primitive power. Even Valéry agreed in seeing this limitless ambition of modern poetry: "La poésie est l'essai de représenter, ou de restituer, par les moyens du langage articulé, ces choses ou cette chose, que tentent obscurément d'exprimer les cris, les larmes, les caresses, les baisers, les soupirs." The new poets have, on the whole, remained faithful to this ambition. Audiberti recently defined poetry as being "the energy of the world." From Nerval to Audiberti, French poetry has been associated with a spiritual activity.

Actual definitions and individual beliefs show some variations, of course. Some poets would consider art an authentic spiritual operation. For them, poetry would be equivalent to a religious experience. Poetry would equate the sacred. For others, art is related to an exterior religious life. Poetry would therefore be the expression given to the sacred. Still others would see art as choosing religious or mystical themes. The sacred for them would be enrolled in the service of poetry.

The critic Rolland de Renéville, who has gone very far in this quasi-mystical interpretation of modern poetry, both in his specific study of Rimbaud and in his study of poetic experience, *L'Expérience Poétique,* states categorically, "Nous avons abandonné la notion classique de la poésie considérée comme un jeu perfide." Poetry remains for most of the new critics and new poets a way of knowledge, a metaphysical way, one revealing the deepest mysteries of man and the universe. The theories and explanations of poetry have in our time been so overpowering that the poet is often paralyzed by his own mystery, by the mysteriousness of his office. The example of Rimbaud's destiny remains the most puzzling but also the most constantly examined of poetic destinies. After four or five years of being the revolutionary poet par excellence, he fled from poetry and all literary preoccupation. The latter part of his life was a denial of all the revolutions he had sung as an adolescent poet.

The ever-growing attention that is being paid to Rimbaud's work, and especially to his prose poems, *Les Illuminations,* is sufficient proof that the tremendous poetic effort he made, though it ended in collapse and failure for himself, has been far from vain for the poets who succeeded him. The presence of Rimbaud in the poetry of today is as real as it is difficult to define and determine. The

history of Rimbaud's influence is that of a very gradual revelation. The *Illuminations* were not known until 1886, the *Saison* until 1895. The celebrated manifesto of his method, *La lettre du Voyant,* was not published until 1912. The method of the *voyant* exceeds the so-called symbolist movement in French poetry. In fact, Rimbaud was a far greater "revelation" for the surrealists of the twenties and thirties than he was for the symbolists of the eighties and nineties. Fifty years prior to the school of surrealism, Rimbaud sensed intuitively what added richness an exploration of the subconscious would offer poetry. In a sense, historically speaking, he was the first to liberate the subconscious for the creation of poetry, or rather he was the first to realize that the subconscious provided one of the mainsprings of poetic inspiration. The new poets of France still read Rimbaud with a feeling that what he did with poetic language and what his poetic experience really consisted of is far from being fully understood in our own time.

On all sides one reads that the French novel today is undergoing an eclipse or a crisis. It is quite true that the form of the novel in France has not, during the past twenty years, been so renovated or rejuvenated as has, for example, the form of the American novel. There are few examples in the recent French novel of inventiveness, boldness, originality. On the whole, it has continued to depict a banal society and a familiar world of objects. An exaggerated belief in "realism," in a painstaking faithfulness to reality, is perhaps one of the major causes for the decadence of the novel. The French reader finds in most of the novels recently published the same daily life which he is able to observe himself in Paris or the provinces. Few writers have dared to depart from the usual form of the French novel: a well-written story, a clearly organized plot, recognizable characters, a familiar society, minute details which are true to life and observable. The critics—and they have been very harsh on the contemporary novel—are still calling for the writer who will purify and recast the form, who will do for the novel what Mallarmé did for poetry. The hopes of some of them are fixed on Raymond Queneau, who, more than others—more even than Sartre and Camus—seems to be affecting the fate of the novel. The writing of Queneau's *Les Temps Mêlés,* for example, is a departure from the usual realist technique. The first part of the novel contains twelve poems which sustain the rest of the work. The second part is a monologue which puts into action the pure sentiments of the first part.The third part is a dialogue

which serves to transform into events the figures and the passions of the story. The innovations of the novel are linguistic and technical, whereby Queneau transforms words and deranges syntax.

The existentialists have read widely in the American novel, especially Dos Passos, Hemingway, Steinbeck, Faulkner, and a staggering number of American novels and books have been translated in the last few years. Interest in the American novel is not limited to the existentialists or to the contemporary American novel. In 1941, *Moby Dick* was translated by Giono and commented on by him. Giono's admiration of this work is somewhat explained by the general inadequacy he felt in French realism. What struck him in the Melville story was the totality of the work, which seemed to be the creation of an entire world. He saw it as an enigmatical work that can be read on several levels. One may see in it an adventure story or the story of a man in love with a forbidden monster. Giono calls it an example of "le véritable réalisme."

Another example of a novel, this time English, whose technique is opposite to that of realism and whose translation appeared in the early forties was *The Waves* of Virginia Woolf. Here was a novel almost without anecdote, almost without characters in the usual sense, from which almost all psychology had been excluded. The French critics saw immediately that the problem of time was uppermost in Mrs. Woolf's art, in her passages on the fortuitous moments in the lives of everyone that reveal ecstasy or the secret meaning of death.

The almost passionate interest with which American literature is being read in France points to a possible fuller mutual understanding. Before loving a country, one first loves its literature. The young Frenchmen have been struck not only by the tragic stories in the American novels, but also by the example of so many writers who have died young and who before dying left brilliant testimonials of their experience: Nathanael West, author of *Miss Lonelyhearts,* killed at thirty-six at the wheel of his car; Scott Fitzgerald, author of *The Great Gatsby,* who died at forty-five through nervous exhaustion and perhaps despair; Thomas Wolfe, who died at thirty-eight. Thanks to these translations, the French can see better that the American doesn't dispose of a long solid cultural tradition which the Frenchman has. They understand better the artistic solitude of a Melville and a Hawthorne, and the despair, described by Dos Passos in his article on Scott Fitzgerald, the American feels of not knowing for whom he writes.

The gifted French critic, Mme. Claude-Edmonde Magny, published last year a book on this subject, *L'Age du Roman Américain,* by which title she means that this age is best characterized by the American novel and cinema. She has been impressed by the fact that the American novelists read preferably such European authors as Joyce, Kafka, Proust, Mann, whose complex architectonic works are vastly different from their own books. She sees the American writer not only as a scapegoat of a society, a kind of sacrificial victim redeeming the subconscious of other men, but also as the man who is going to re-create a "church," a community that will be sacred. Her elaborate analysis and interpretation of Faulkner is the central chapter in her thesis of the reconstruction of a community. In Faulkner's case it is a community of sinners all of whom assume the same guilt. She points out a relationship between Faulkner and Melville, Graham Greene and Bernanos, all of whom are men reconstructing a church in this particular sense which Magny gives to a church.

This mention of the American novel leads me quite naturally to Sartre, who himself has published two essays on Faulkner in the first volume of his essays, *Situations.* The bulk of the second volume of *Situations,* published in 1948, is given over to a long essay entitled, *"Qu'est-ce que la littérature?"* This work, with Malraux's *Psychologie de l'Art,* appears to me to be one of the most significant literary productions of the last few years. No other work of Sartre illustrates better than this his remarkable intelligence, his learning, his polemic power. He is concerned in this work with the literary movement of the last thirty years, with its metamorphoses and its development which may now be threatened. Sartre is a skillful, almost diabolical dialectician. He openly scorns the philosopher-critic Taine, but in the fifty pages where he reviews literature of the last three centuries and avoids the error of the seventeenth-century writers who paid no heed to the economic, political, religious, metaphysical factors in a writer, he is employing a method quite similar to Taine's. Sartre admires very few. His hostility to Flaubert is well known. He compares Mallarmé's work to an icy silence *(Ce silence de glace, l'oeuvre de Mallarmé).* He disapproves of Valéry's abstractions and Proust's bourgeoisism. Sartre wants a writer to participate in his period *(s'engager),* not in order to preserve it but to help in its process of change, to precipitate its evolution. Nothing, he warns, assures us

that literature is immortal. The chance for literature today is, he believes, the chance for Europe, for democracy, for peace. Literature is a kind of wager which may be lost.

When, during the occupation, the first novel of Albert Camus appeared, it was noticed for the sobriety of its style and the unusualness of its atmosphere. The adventure it related seemed to be the discovery of the absurdity of the universe. Meursault's crime was gratuitous. It meant that everything happens without our willing it. During the trial of the "stranger," he was struck by the forced and false logic that men insist upon applying to everything. The trial scene is a kind of retreat from society, comparable perhaps to the exercise the contemplative imposes upon himself in order to feel that he is a stranger in this world. In prison Meursault doesn't suffer but feels himself a stranger.

Camus illustrated the meaning of the book, his philosophy of the absurd, in his brief work, *Mythe de Sisyphe*. The universe is indecipherable and limited, and yet man feels in himself a deep need of logic, happiness, immortality. In *La Peste,* Camus gives to men the privilege of judging the situation which is hostile to them. In this protest of humanity, the theme of Prometheus is audible. In fact, some aspect of the Promethean revolt against the gods appears in most of the writers of the generation of Camus. Orestes in *Les Mouches* of Sartre defies Zeus, who tries to force him into a pattern of obedience and hypocrisy. Antigone of Anouilh revolts against the false gods whom the order of the state tries to impose. Bernanos, in all his books, castigates the Pharisees. The word "despair" *(désespoir),* so often used by the heroes of novels and plays of today, is as necessary as the meditation on the nothingness of man for the spiritual progress of a religious. If there is a Promethean revolt today, it is the will not to be resigned to the falseness and compromise of society.

COMMENT

THREE of the articles in this second number of MEASURE—those of Professors McIlwain, Howe, and Hocking—raise an issue concerning the nature and destiny of man which no journal can evade if it is to speak to an international audience on serious subjects. Have such words as justice, charity, love, kindness, beauty, virtue, and wisdom a content transcending place and time? Or are they mere names which all men and women and all societies are free to interpret without regard to any universal principles, subject only to the limitation—which may become compelling—that the interpretation must conform to the law of the strongest?

On this issue our three contributors are of different minds. The distinction drawn by Mr. McIlwain between the political thought of Bodin and of Hobbes arises because "Bodin's sovereign," unlike Hobbes' sovereign, cannot do what he likes; because, as McIlwain puts it, the "laws of which he is free do *not* include the law of God, the law of nature, or the fundamental laws of the monarchy." McIlwain has never concealed his conviction that the political theory of Bodin is superior to that of Hobbes because of the limitations imposed by a higher law upon all worldly authority. For McIlwain this higher law is not a mere fiction, or a product of his own or of Bodin's preferences; it exists.

For Professor Howe such a conviction in the twentieth century is the product not of a rational mind but of a weak "stomach." Howe tells us that the vital question is: "Are we intellectually willing and emotionally able to accept that total skepticism which led [Mr. Justice] Holmes to question whether man has a cosmic significance 'different in kind from that which belongs to a baboon or a grain of sand'?"

For Professor Hocking, "total skepticism" is the result of "false oppositions," of the assumption that skepticism is incompatible with a belief in the existence of general principles, independent of our

individual egos, as a guide in interpreting particular evidence and in reaching any kind of decision, whether in public or private life or in creative work. "It is the 'relativity of Truth' which has sanctioned the surrender of its universality," Mr. Hocking writes, "and relative truth is quite generally supposed, even among professors, to be incompatible with absolute truth. On the contrary, it assumes absolute truth."

The immense value of the skeptical mind to knowledge, to understanding, and to decency is not open to question. Mr. Howe has performed a valuable service in showing, with interesting biographical evidence, that Holmes's skepticism in the realm of law has ethical value, coming as it did when lawyers such as Choate invoked dogmatically universal principles to justify their particular prejudices and so betrayed the principles instead of giving them body. But I cannot follow Howe toward the end of his article, when he argues that universal skepticism can and should provide an alternative to faith in the existence of firm principles available to human beings independent of the self.

Is such a conclusion supported by Howe's earlier demonstration? This demonstration hardly shows that skepticism can be a substitute for all belief. Even Holmes's stomach was not strong enough to keep him always a skeptic. Was he not taking refuge in an "absolute" when he told his Memorial Day audience "that no man who lives in the same world with most of us can doubt . . . that the faith is true and adorable which leads a soldier to throw away his life in obedience to a blindly accepted duty"? In an earlier Memorial Day address (which Mr. Howe does not quote but which is consistent with what he tells us about Holmes's comrades in the Civil War), the great jurist made plain that he regarded the "soldier's faith" of the South as no less "sacred" than that of the North.

All of us who have lived during the first half of the twentieth century have felt the spell of the heroism that moved Holmes. We have seen comrades give their lives nobly, without a belief in any other cosmic purpose than the sacrifice. Yet if we consider recent history objectively we are bound to ask whether the ultimate belief which Holmes's skepticism led him to accept is not a false "absolute." Without a just cause, is the "soldier's faith" anything more than a "faith" in suicide and in murder? Even those who stomach the belief that man's significance is of the same kind as that of a baboon, a grain of sand, or a cockroach, have now to recognize that men have armed themselves with weapons more effective than those available to any other form of life yet discovered in the physical universe. If men

retain enough "faith" in murder and suicide, they may well do a more thorough job in wiping out their own species than in exterminating the cockroaches!

According to the faith of our ancestors, and according to the faith of some other civilizations besides the Christian, murder and suicide are snares of the devil. Neither forms part of "the law of God and the law of nature" by which Bodin's sovereign is bound. The fact, which Howe stresses, that recent writers on the law who support the natural law are inferior to Holmes as jurists and as men, that they make a weak case, is irrelevant to the argument, which is not about persons but about principles.

But how can it be shown that there is any way of distinguishing principles from the persons who hold or reject them? Is there any evidence to refute the view of Hobbes, and of so many others since his time, that each individual's senses lead him only to his own particular ideas of what truth, or beauty, or virtue are, in the light of his egocentric fears and interests?

Even as late as the time of Hobbes, when America was beginning to be widely settled, the very great majority of our Western European ancestors believed in the existence of absolute truth. They identified it with God. Hobbes did not deny that God is truth. But Hobbes cut the cords which previous Christian philosophers and theologians had conceived of as binding man by his intellect to God, and enabling him to participate dimly and imperfectly, by efforts of his will, in Truth.

What has led a large proportion of the descendants of the Western Europeans to reject two propositions which were once widely accepted as self-evident: that truth exists independent of men (a proposition which Hobbes did not deny), and that men, by virtue of their *human* nature, have some access to it (a proposition which Hobbes rejected)? One cause has been the growing supposition that tangible material evidence, of the kind acceptable to the natural scientist, is the only evidence that can be used in dealing with this problem. Another cause has been the assumption, widely held since the eighteenth century, that the evidence of the natural scientist is against both propositions.

The different rational procedures of art and philosophy have never ceased to provide evidence that man is drawn by forces that transcend his individual self. Let me take as an example the testimony of a great artist of the early twentieth century, Marcel Proust. Proust has been criticized on the ground that, in pursuing his art, he lacked a "hierarchy of values," and certainly he was not a proponent of the faith

of our fathers. His testimony, therefore, should have for the modern mind an objectivity which is frequently denied a Christian poet and man of letters, like T. S. Eliot. Yet the two are not far apart concerning the source of art.

Proust's position is certainly not that God is Truth, nor that God exists. But he brings me the testimony of art that the inspiration of the creative mind cannot be adequately explained as simply the product of the individual's ego, of the individual's sense impressions going their own sweet way without external *spiritual* control. In a famous passage of *La Prisonnière,* in which he describes the death of his great man of letters, Bergotte, Proust suggests that the moral good, like the inspiration of the creative mind, cannot be plausibly represented as the exclusive function of the individual's material experiences in the tangible world of sense impressions:

> Permanently dead? Who shall say? Certainly our experiments in spiritualism prove no more than the dogmas of religion that the soul survives death. All that we can say is that everything is arranged in this life as though we entered it carrying the burden of obligations contracted in a former life; there is no reason inherent in the conditions of life on this earth that can make us consider ourselves obliged to do good, to be fastidious, to be polite even, nor make the talented artist consider himself obliged to begin over again a score of times a piece of work the admiration aroused by which will matter little to his body devoured by worms, like the patch of yellow wall painted with so much knowledge and skill by an artist who must forever remain unknown and is barely identified under the name Vermeer. All these obligations which have not their sanction in our present life seem to belong to a different world, founded upon kindness, scrupulosity, self-sacrifice, a world entirely different from this, which we leave in order to be born into this world, before perhaps returning to the other to live once again beneath the sway of those unknown laws which we have obeyed because we bore their precepts in our hearts, knowing not whose hand had traced them there—those laws to which every profound work of the intellect brings us nearer and which are invisible only—and still!—to fools. So that the idea that Bergotte was not wholly and permanently dead is by no means improbable.

What I can say, then, is that the testimony of art, even for some freethinkers of the early twentieth century, does not support the proposition of Hobbes, that the human individual's experience with moral, intellectual, and spiritual values is circumscribed by his birth and death, or that human life has not a significance "different in kind from that which belongs to a baboon or a grain of sand." Proust goes further. He suggests that the testimony of art is not *against* the possibility that the soul is immortal, for this idea *est sans invraisemblance.*

The philosopher, like the artist, is guided by external necessity. By means of rational discussion he arrives at statements which compel his assent whether or not they are in his interest or to his liking as an individual. It is knowledge of this *voluntary* servitude of men to the dictates of reason which leads McIlwain to consider Bodin's political theory superior to Hobbes's.

This external necessity transcends the observations and the experiments of the natural scientist. But there is nothing in the recent discoveries of science that is incompatible with it. Beyond matter, space, and time lies a mystery that is none of these three, Whittaker and Weizsäcker tell us. Beyond the knowledge we can gain of the human body lies the mystery of the intellect, Sherrington tells us. During the past four hundred years the advances in knowledge have not made the existence of absolute truth any less possible than it seemed to Plato, or any less possible than it was when the great majority of our ancestors took its existence for granted.

JOHN U. NEF

M. CERCLER says "capitalist agriculture" means to the Frenchman American agriculture. He recognizes, however, that in the strict sense of the quasi-industrial farmer-operator—who lives in town, winters in Florida, and is written up in *Life*—such "capitalist" agriculture constitutes only a minor aspect of American farming. Yet if M. Cercler's picture of mechanized "soil-mining" is not a picture of American farming, then it has only a trivial meaning for his larger international problem; and on the other hand, if he does intend it as a picture of American farming it is in need of some important modifications.

First then, let us very briefly call to mind what is in fact the general character of American farming, and then ask in what respect "capitalism" has contributed to the two evils of modern American agriculture which M. Cercler stresses; i.e., over-mechanization and (to anticipate one of the necessary modifications of his description) wrong land use.

The total of farms and ranches in America is between five and six million. Of these, at least one quarter are ten-acre holdings, which are largely either subsistence farms, truck farms, or small tracts owned by industrial workers who raise some vegetables and chickens and perhaps keep a cow. Almost another quarter are ranches and large-scale vegetable and fruit enterprises. Even here the large scale

of the operation, in acreage, should not blind us to the fact that very many of these are in no sense corporation or factory-type farms, but are regularly operated by an individual and his family. Almost one-half of the total and nearly all the general farms of the nation are between eighty and three hundred and twenty acres. These are farms on which the family of the farmer furnishes the entire labor force with the exception, in less than one-third of the cases, of a single hired man or, at most, two. Such farms, engaged in the production of milk or of hogs and cattle or sheep, and raising grain for the animals, are not run by farmers who live in adjoining towns, and their contact with their animals and their land is certainly as close as that of the French peasant proprietor. In terms of the space devoted to them in the farm magazines, of the organizations directed by them, such as the Farm Bureau, the Grange, and the Farmers' Union, they have a fair claim to be called the typical American farmer. And actually, as the above statistics show, "capitalist" is hardly the best name for this sort of farming. The "family farm" is far better, or at least if one calls it capitalist, one must think in terms of a relatively small business run by a single businessman, and not of a large scale industrial concern.

What, then, of the vices of mechanization and "mono-culture" as applied to this more general picture of American farming? M. Cercler describes the characteristic drive of capitalist agriculture as the profit motive in a simple and naked form, and he attributes both the evils in question to this unqualified motive.

First, with respect to mechanization, M. Cercler believes that the American farmer has taken to the tractor as the most effective tool for "mining" the soil—for working more land, raising more crops, and reducing expenses of production. Perhaps he has; but the propaganda which is thought effective by the tractor companies does not seem to support the idea. Their chief appeal to the farmer is not to work so hard. Every farmer is urged to invest capital in a constantly increasing amount of machinery, so that he will have to spend less and less time on farming (or drudgery, as it is usually called) and have more time to himself. What he would do with this time if he had it is not exactly clear; but the eventuality rarely presents itself. For, thanks to the prevalence of power farming and the diminution in the farm population which it has occasioned, the farmers left on the land are constantly being driven to attempt the near impossible in agricultural achievement. It is not uncommon in the Middle Western states to find a single farmer, with the help of a boy or an old man, working three hundred and twenty acres of crop

land, besides attending to a barn of milk cows and/or feeding steers and hogs. There is no doubt whatever that such men work harder and are exposed to a more intense nervous strain than their fathers or grandfathers. They work like this, not because of an insatiate hunger for money which is characteristic of them and uncharacteristic of either their ancestors or their French contemporaries, but because they have been caught in a kind of situation which they do not entirely understand and out of which they see no escape.

That situation may perhaps be described somewhat as follows. The basic assumption of almost everybody in America at present is that physical strength and even physical skill (except in games) are degrading forms of human exploitation and that in some way both these things should be replaced by machines in order to free human beings for higher pursuits. The farmer is as much imbued with this doctrine as is anyone else. With the moral implications of this we are not concerned here, but with its economic consequences in agriculture. There is no doubt at all that a measure of mechanization which, by means of custom work, can bring about greater efficiency of small as well as larger farms in the United States, is very desirable. There is equally no doubt that most farms in the United States, and particularly small and medium-sized farms of the general farming kind, are grossly overcapitalized in machinery. The reason is not, however, what M. Cercler suggests—that the farmer mechanizes out of an essentially "industrial" view of the land which the tractor and various mechanical devices help him to exploit. It is, in fact, just the opposite. It is because the full force of the profit motive is no longer effective in American agriculture. The farmer on the small and medium-sized farm rarely feels that it is reasonable to use the labor and small-scale methods which his smaller acreage allows him. Actually this would be a very important advantage over the larger farmers who *must* mechanize heavily. Instead of utilizing it, the small farmer usually thinks that he too should be relieved of certain sorts of physical work, the capacity for which he does not view as an asset, but as an advantage taken of himself by an unjust logic of situation. Thus, if he can actually do effective work, agriculturally, with one tractor and a team of horses, and he must care for the horses and spend longer hours in the field driving them rather than an additional tractor, he envies his neighbor with the second tractor and usually ends by buying one. The cost of the second tractor, the crucial step in mechanization in the modern American small general farm, is an enormous additional expense unwarranted by the returns. This has been pointed out more than once by various

experiment stations and the agricultural colleges. At this point, the small farmer tries to rent extra land to pay for his second tractor instead of farming his own acreage more intensively; and the usual waste results.

Secondly, single-crop culture, which M. Cercler describes as one of the most destructive effects of capitalist agriculture practiced in the United States, is no longer a national problem. Yet, if a criticism in terms of single-crop culture is no longer in place, the general land use system of even the mixed farming districts certainly can be and has been criticized, notably by agricultural colleges and government agencies. Again, however, it is not the direct spur of the profit motive which is the culprit, but a more complex pattern of circumstances. In point of agricultural knowledge, the European background of most American farmers is not of the best. They came largely from poor arable land where they were rarely owners. The dynamic of American agriculture has inevitably to be a kind of learning and synthesis of practices current elsewhere in the world and consciously applied here. The best land use practices for America center around legumes in the rotation, and are well known to the agricultural colleges. But it is not in the interest of any large-scale industry to force them on the farmer's attention. And he learns necessarily, in this capitalist society, much more easily from the salesmanship of manufacturers than from the scientific or semiscientific teaching of the government and the colleges.

Beyond these modifications of M. Cercler's criticism, moreover, I should like to suggest that M. Cercler, as the eloquent defendant of peasant agriculture, could not, perhaps, be expected to have seen a hint of the positive contribution which the American farmer may yet make to the agriculture of the future. The key to this contribution lies in M. Cercler's own phrase: "the so-called rational methods of exploitation proposed for modern agriculture." The rational patterns are those employed consciously and by choice on the part of the practitioners to achieve maximum profit or maximum yield from the ground. Therein lies the difference from the past (and what remains of it in today's peasant farming), for this, the old kind of farming, did not involve the choice or—in the simplest sense of the term—willingness on the part of the peasant. The infinity of labor which the French peasant bestows on his land is not drawn from a simple unforced love of the land. He learned to love it because servitude, fear of starvation, fear of the city, first taught him how to cultivate it; in the end he learned a kind of love and sensitivity to ground, animals, and climate which transcended in quality any

of his more unforced emotions. He had to work hard to live and so ended with a life of work which had in it real fulfillment. It is the predicament of our day, of industrialized democracy, that the compulsions of the past affect the farmer much less. Today he is a farmer very largely out of choice, and it is only this choice that keeps him a farmer. And if the farmer *chooses* to be a farmer he must have some incentive to do so. And it is true that in capitalist democracies such as those of Western Europe and the United States this incentive must include profit, or at least the belief in the profitableness of the enterprise. Although farming need not be the most profitable enterprise available to the man who chooses it—for it may have other qualities which make up for its inferiority in this regard—it must certainly ensure the farmer a reasonable living. The significant question about modern American farming (and, I would venture to say, about farming today in any democracy) is whether the profit motive as at least partial or indirect driving force, combined with the acquisition of knowledge, much more consciously now than the peasant's, *can* lead to the same skill and the same devotion as that of the past. Without this skill and devotion, I agree with M. Cercler, the result is likely to be catastrophic.

DAVID GRENE

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